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Rev. I

UNION.

UNION;

OR

THE DIVIDED CHURCH MADE ONE.

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BY THE REV. JOHN HARRIS,
Author of
"MAMMON," "THE GREAT TEACHER," &c., &c.

Revised American Edition.

BOSTON:
GOULD, KENDALL & LINCOLN,
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PUBLISHER'S ADVERTISEMENT.

THERE can be little difference of opinion in respect to the importance and desirableness of union among all who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. But in regard to the mode by which this union can best be effected, there are wide diversities of sentiment. Various writers have suggested plans, of the practicability of which they are themselves exceedingly sanguine; but no plan seems yet to have so far commended itself to the confidence of Christians as to encourage any considerable number to agree to subject it to the test of experiment. The author of the following Treatise has ventured forward with his opinion, and now solicits for it the consideration of the candid and reflecting. The Publishers of the American edition, not fully coinciding with him in some of his positions, submitted the work to a clerical friend, by whom a few notes have been in-

serted in the margin, mostly in the shape of interrogations, simply for the purpose of inducing the reader to pause and consider whether the Author's views are really sound and scriptural. No alteration has been made in the text, except in one instance, where a quotation from Scripture was corrected to make it conform to the received version.

Whatever may be thought of the Author's theory, every reader will allow that he conducts the discussion in his usual masterly style, with a temper truly amiable, and fitted, as a sweet exemplification of his principles, to promote the end which he appears most fervently to desire.

Boston, June, 1838.

PREFACE.

PERHAPS there is no denomination of Protestant Christians whose religious opinions are now precisely what they were fifty years ago. Retaining the same general platform of evangelical truth, and adhering, for the most part, as closely as ever to the letter of our distinctive tenets, certain modifications of particular points of doctrine have yet insensibly taken place, eminently favorable, as far as they go, to our closer approximation, and visible union.

Owing however to the operation of other and hostile causes, it is lamentably obvious that such approximation has not occurred. The Christian Church is still "a house divided against itself." There, where we might have looked for the sepulchre of all the evil

passions, we find their rendezvous and their home.* Political governments, it is said, are, for the present, tired of war; but that divine institution which should have been known as the peacemaker of the world, and which ought to have exhibited a model of holy unanimity, even if all the world were in arms, gives signs of continuing to distinguish itself by conflict if all the world were at peace. Even the subterranean fires of the earth are said to be burning out and expiring; but the devouring flames of ecclesiastical strife seem fed from an inexhaustible source, and show little direct indication of abating their volcanic activity. Well would it be for mankind if the fearful effects they produce were no more injurious than those of the lava from the crater. But while this only spreads a local alarm, and suspends the affairs of a town, these are retarding the movements of our political government, agitating the heart of the nation, making the very foundations of society vibrate, and shedding a pernicious in-

* Rather too strongly expressed. Ed.

PREFACE.

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schism his object has been, not to criminate parties, but to inculcate mutual forbearance, to lay bare the disease with a simple view to its removal—that the union which he advocates, so far from requiring the subjugation or absorption of any one section of the faithful, guarantees the integrity and security of each by seeking the fellowship of all—and that, agreeable as that union must be in itself, and eminently advantageous as it would be to those who are immediately concerned, he pleads for it chiefly for the sake of that world whose myriads are daily perishing in their guilt, and whose conversion, according to the prayer of Christ, is conditionally suspended on the instrumentality of a united Church.

Were he to suppose that in the development of these views he has introduced nothing at which party feeling will take offence, he would evince an ignorance of the past and the present but little suited to the execution of his task. Indeed, when it is considered that this morbid feeling could hardly listen to the enforcement of Christian unity even in the language of Scripture itself, without pro-

nouncing it, for the present, impracticable and unseasonable, the question is, whether such offence is not to be looked for and regarded as a sign of his impartiality and fidelity to his object. Be this as it may, he can truly aver to those of every community whom alone he desires to behold united—"the faithful in Christ Jesus"—that while, on the one hand, he has not knowingly omitted a single sentence merely for the sake of gratifying one party, he has not, on the other, introduced a word for the mere purpose of criminating any other party. So that if, in any instance, it should be his lot to reap division where his only aim has been to sow unity, he will regard it as an additional reason to appeal from earth to heaven, and, in the appropriate language of the Collect for Unity, say, "O God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, our only Saviour, the Prince of Peace; give us grace seriously to lay to heart the great dangers we are in by our unhappy divisions. Take away all hatred and prejudice, and whatsoever else may hinder us from godly union and concord: that,

as there is but one body, and one Spirit, and one hope of our calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of us all, so we may henceforth be all of one heart, and of one soul, united in one holy bond of truth and peace, of faith and charity, and may with one mind and one mouth glorify thee; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

UNION,

&c.

INTRODUCTION.

THERE appears to be a growing conviction among Christians in the present day, that the Church of Christ, notwithstanding its increasing activity and enlargement, is laboring under many and serious evils. Indeed, the attention which these evils are attracting, constitutes one of the most hopeful signs of the times; especially, as it seems to be connected with a desire to ascertain and apply the appropriate remedies.

1. The result of the writer's observation and reading would lead him to infer, that the principal evils to be deplored are reducible to three

heads,—Covetousness, Schism, and Indevotion. In other words, that the great wants of the Christian Church are Liberality, Union, and a spirit of Prayer. This opinion by no means undertakes to place these desiderata in the order in which they should be met, nor to determine their comparative importance. It simply affirms that they exist; and that the removal of one of them would be the removal of a train of minor and dependent evils; if not, also, the removal of the other two.

2. The first of the three evils which we have named has been recently considered in a Treatise expressly on the subject, and which is still engaging a measure of the public attention.* The present Essay relates to the second evil of the series—Schism. And, without seeking to aggrandise the importance of this subject at the expense of the other two, it may be clearly shown that it possesses one very important feature peculiar to itself. Schism is an evil, *the existence of which is undeniable, and the degrees of which, in every age, are strictly definable.* The Great Founder of the Christian Church, explicitly requires that it shall be *one.*

* Mammon, or Covetousness the sin of the Christian Church.

And here it will be permitted by the reader, and will be sufficient for the writer, to assume, that the oneness intended is, at least, a union of affection. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye love one another." Every instance of division, therefore, which incapacitates Christians for reciprocating sincere expressions of Christian love with any part of the Church, is an unequivocal breach of this great law of unity. Let the subject of difference be ever so trivial in itself, and the breach apparently ever so narrow, still, if it reach down to the heart, it is schism: or let it embrace ever so many particulars, and some of them even of considerable importance, still if it leave the heart entire, and allow a visible interchange of Christian offices, the sin is absent. The law of Christ on the subject is so definite, that we can lay our finger, so to speak, on the very point where the sin of schism begins; and, by comparing the existing state of the Christian Church with the express requirements of that law, we can determine, with all the exactness of a chemical analysis, the places and the degrees in which it exists.

Now the same definiteness and precision cannot be predicated, either of Christian liber-

ality, or of a spirit of prayer. These are subjects of individual concern; and as the circumstances of every Christian differ from those of every other Christian, they must necessarily be left to the individual responsibility of each to God. But Christian union relates to believers in their collective capacity; and, therefore, the great Lawgiver has not left the duty to be modified by circumstances, nor adjusted by individuals. He has determined that nothing shall ever justify the absence of substantial union—of visible affection—from the ranks of his followers. Besides, the most earnest supplication may be that which is offered in the closet with "the door shut;" and the amplest donation made by "the right hand," may be that of which even "the left hand" knows nothing;—a fact of which the worldly professor of religion is quick to take advantage; and which renders it extremely difficult to bring home to an unwilling mind the charges of covetousness and indevotion which may lie against it. But the union of the Christian Church is a visible thing; and its relative value consists chiefly in its visibility. It stands in the same relation to liberality and prayer, as the walls of the temple did to the services

within. The munificence and devotion of the worshippers could be judged of only by the worshippers themselves; but whoever chose to walk about Zion, and mark her bulwarks, could easily report the state of her towers and walls: if these were rent and dilapidated, and in a state to invite rather than to repel an invader, he would then be justified in concluding that the fires on the altar were burning but dimly, and that the sacred courts were comparatively deserted.

In the same way, the divided condition of the Christian Church will assist us in judging of the state of its internal piety. When we attempt to exhibit its covetousness and indevotion, as compared with the Primitive Church, or with the requirements of the Christian Lawgiver, we are regarded by the great bulk of worldly professors as indulging in exaggeration; and a suspicion will occasionally cross our own minds, that the representation is too repulsive to be true. But the divided state of the Christian Church shows that the suspicion is unwarranted: it says to us, in language not to be misunderstood, "Can any representation of the *internal* state of the Christian community be greatly exaggerated, when its *external* state is

so rent and dismantled? Remember the all-pervading unity of affection which the Saviour required in his Church; contrast that oneness with its *actual* condition at this moment; and then say, whether the alarming degree, in which Christian union is wanting in the Church, would not justify your utmost fears concerning the absence of liberality and devotion also? What can you expect from a Church whose members, instead of worshipping together in one spirit—laying all the fuel of its affections upon one altar—withdraw, and separate into parties, and erect each its distinct altar, one on Mount Gerizim, and another on Mount Zion—what, but that the fires on each should burn dimly? What can you expect from the man who loveth not his brother-Christian whom he hath seen, but that he cannot love God whom he hath not seen?" Thus the subject of schism not only possesses a feature peculiar to itself, it may also be made highly subservient in detecting the presence, and determining the probable amount of covetousness and indevotion.

3. But important as the subject of schism is in itself, and useful as it may be made as a test of the state of the Church generally, the writer

would remember that the utility of any Treatise on it will materially depend, under God, on the spirit in which it is discussed. When the state of the ancient temple was to be reported on, an angel was the agent sent, and a golden measuring rod the instrument he was to employ—the highest created intelligence and an unerring standard. The writer cannot pretend to approach his task with the pure and passionless mind of an angelic nature; but he earnestly desires to imitate him in forming a lofty estimate of the hallowed employment he has undertaken; in bringing no line or measure to the work, but the perfect rule of Divine Revelation; and in applying that rule with as steady and impartial a hand as if he saw the Lord of angels himself looking on. *Feeling* that he is approaching a subject which the passions of men have enveloped in considerable mist and difficulty, he would humbly invoke—implore—importune God for the indispensable illumination and guidance of his Holy Spirit. Remembering that it is a subject which will bring to light much of the infirmity of some of the holiest and most honored servants of God—men "of whom the world was not worthy," and who "are now without fault before the throne

of God"—he would bring to it a spirit of patient forbearance and tender compassion. Recollecting that it is a subject on which some of the best of men have grievously differed and misrepresented each other, he would approach it with deep humiliation; calling injustice and wrong by their proper names wherever he may find them; not extenuating the crimes and follies of those whose memories in other respects he may hold dear; unveiling the faults of other parties, not for purposes of unholy exultation and reproach, but simply from fidelity to the cause of truth, to extract lessons of humility and Christian charity, and to inculcate a mutual oblivion of the past—firmly believing, as he does, that whenever the breaches of the Churches shall be healed, it will be a season, not of triumph to any single party, but of mutual concession and of general humiliation, that "in those days, and in that time, ... the children of Israel shall come, they and the children of Judah, *together, going and weeping:* they shall go, and seek the Lord their God." Fully aware how nearly even a virtuous indignation is allied to hatred, and how often schism has been decried in the true spirit of schism, he would distrust the purity of every

passion but that of love for the truth, and the desire of conciliating and uniting all its followers. And impressed with the idea, that the honor of God is deeply concerned in the present attempt, he would prosecute it, as if he saw the eye of flaming fire resting on him, or as if he had reached the thrice-hallowed spot where the Greater Intercessor prayed for his people "that they all might be one," and heard him still repeating the request.

With such impressions, and in the exercise of such a spirit, we propose, in the treatment of the subject, to pursue the following plan:— I. To exhibit the Scripture doctrine of the Unity of the Church. II. The Nature of that Unity; or, wherein its Oneness consists. III. We shall then show that Schism is the Breach of that Unity. IV. Trace the Causes of Schism; especially those which existed from the Earliest Age of the Christian Church to the Period of the Reformation. V. The principal Means which have perpetuated the Divisions of Christians from that period to the present; and which are still in fatal operation. VI. Various Tests by which the Schismatical Spirit may be detected in Individuals and in Churches. VII. Its Sinfulness and its Evils. VIII. Its Pleas

and Disguises. IX. Its Removal; or, the Kind of Union to be Attempted. X. The Means by which this Union should be sought. XI. And, finally, the Reasons which should impel the Christian Church to Unite.

CHAPTER I.

THE SCRIPTURE DOCTRINE OF THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH.

As schism is a relative term, it is natural and proper that we should begin with an inquiry into the nature of that to which the term relates —the Christian Church. And in every inquiry relating to Christian doctrine or duty, our first concern should undoubtedly be to ascertain the mind of God as revealed in his word.

The term εκκλησια (Ecclesia,) in the New Testament, which our translators have rendered by the word *church*, is one which originally denotes a popular assembly, or gathering of persons into one place, without any reference to the character of the persons convened, or to the object of their meeting. In this general sense it is employed, Acts xix. 32. But as a religious appellation, it invariably denotes either the whole body of the faithful, or some one assembly of such persons associated together for the worship of God. In the former sense, our Lord affirmed,* "upon this rock will I build my

* Matt. xvi. 18.

church;" contemplating the majestic assembly —the number which no man can number— who, in all the ages to come, should form the great Christian community: and in the same sense it is affirmed, that "he is the Head over all things to the church, which is his body." When the term church is employed in the latter sense, it is always accompanied with a specification of the place where it was accustomed to convene;—as, "the church which is at Corinth," "at Ephesus," or, "at Rome:"—so that it differs from the former, only as a part differs from the whole; while the idea of UNION essentially pervades them both.

The collective oneness of believers, appears to have been designedly taught by each of the series of types appointed from the beginning to adumbrate the nature of the Christian Church. He who "sees the end from the beginning," saw fit to sketch an outline of his ultimate and most comprehensive purposes on some of his earliest and minutest works; impressing on the first stone the figure of the complete pyramid— and on the atom the laws of the globe. He who "made all things for himself," appears to have *so* made them, that the *least* should contain a prophecy of the greatest; and that the *natural* should mutely prefigure and promise the spiritual. Thus, the earliest social relation, and that which is the appointed source of every other—the marriage union—reflects, in "a mystery," the union of Christ and his Church. And the creation at first of only one woman, and the Divine permission ever since of but one contemporaneous wife, appear to have been

divinely intended to denote the collective oneness of "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Eph. v. 25—33; Rev. xix. 8.

As a family is the natural result of marriage, so the next great type in the series appointed to denote the unity of the Church, was *the oneness of a family*. This appears to have been the pervading idea of the patriarchal dispensation; of which Abraham was the principal person. And hence it was, according to the Apostle Paul, that Ishmael was cast out; in order, partly, that the typical family might remain at peace and unity within itself. Gal. iv. 28—31.

As a number of families form a nation, so "the church in the wilderness"—the "twelve-tribed" Israelites assembled at the foot of Sinai, and afterwards at the festivals on Sion, were a *national* emblem of the collected Church. "Ye are come," saith the Apostle, "unto Mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God."* Like the Jews, but in a sense superior, you have one common centre, in which you not merely meet, but where you habitually reside—in God's only palace upon earth, his Church. Like the tribes resorting from all parts of Judea to Jerusalem—like the *Panathenaica*, or great convention (πανηγυρις) of the Athenians—you form one "general assembly" (πανηγυρις)—one glorious *concessus* of all orders. All of you are equally "first-born;" having equal rights on earth, and the prospect

* Schoettgen has amply proved, in his dissertation on this subject, that by this phrase is to be understood the Church of the New Testament.

of the same inheritance in heaven. And being all alike *civitate donati*, made free of the Church, you are enrolled in the same celestial register. You all meet at the same throne, and in the same presence; and by assembling there, you meet with the spirits of all the perfected just: for the throne of the great *pater-familias*, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, is the rendezvous of all his spiritual offspring. One Mediator—better far than Moses—unites your interests, and represents them all in his own person; and presents your supplications in his one priestly censer. And one atonement—such as Abel never offered—lays the foundation of your common hope. And to all this *you have come*. As those who, being admitted freemen, were said to have come into the very constitution of the Roman polity—to have the *jus civitatis Romanæ*, the rights of citizenship—though living a thousand miles off, so you belong to the great commonwealth of the Christian Church.

In the local unity and representative oneness of the Jewish tribes, then, we behold a projected shadow of that spiritual entireness which was to be realized in the constitution of the Christian Church. The tribes collected at Sinai, or on Sion, were "an allegory," of which the Church of Christ is the truth, liberated and embodied.

The unity of the Church was a doctrine not only prefigured, but predicted. One of the earliest characteristics of the Messiah was, that "to him should the gathering of the people be." Under his reign, saith Isaiah, "Ephraim shall

not envy Judah, and Judah shall not vex Ephraim." While the union of the two is often predicted, in evident reference to the ultimate union of the Church under Christ; then "one king shall be king to them all,—neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all;" he will "turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve him with one consent;" and he will give to them "one heart and one way." They shall constitute a Church, in whose peaceful bosom but one heart shall exist, to sway their motions and direct their actions,—a heart which shall beat in harmony with heaven, and whose every pulse shall diffuse life and joy to the remotest members. And so far from shunning each other, and seeking separate paths, they shall have but "one way," in which they shall advance together—a loving, happy, pilgrim band.

Accordingly, "when the fullness of time was come," and Christ appeared on earth, he devoted himself to the great office of realizing those types and fulfilling those predictions; in other words, he sought to unite us to each other, by restoring us to God.

For this purpose, *he assumed an identity of nature.* "Both he that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are *all of one;* for which cause he is not ashamed to *call them brethren,* saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren; *in the midst of the church* will I sing praise unto thee." By assuming our nature into a union with his own, he has demonstrated to our hopes that nothing great or illustrious is

to be denied us; that all heaven is open before us; so that he would have our only object of contention to be, which shall approach the nearest to his own exalted state. By thus honoring and crowning our nature in the face of the universe, he would not merely shame us out of our mutual differences, but would present us to each other as new and magnificent objects of affection. By describing himself as standing "in the midst of the church,"—its central and solar glory—he would have us to feel our union to each other in our common dependence upon him. And by "calling us brethren," he would remind his followers that they form a brotherhood; and that they are not to be ashamed of, nor in any way to disgrace, the sacred relationship. Whatever infirmities and defects they may see in a fellow-Christian, they are to remember that he is treading the ascent of truth and goodness; that, at length, he will reach an elevation in that upward path, where he will be richly entitled to all their esteem; that the holiest of those who are now before the throne will finally hail him as a companion, and delight in his converse: and that whatever excellences he will then display, he now possesses in the principle or seed. They are to remember that all the followers of Christ are even now the objects of *his* ennobling love; that *he* is not ashamed to call them brethren, and is, at this moment, discharging for them all the kind and beneficent offices of brotherhood; and, remembering this, their affections should expand and embrace the whole as members of the family of Christ.

But not only did our Lord plainly imply that such was his object, he expressly declared it. "I am the good shepherd," said he, "I know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life that I may take it again." From which remarkable exposition of the Divine plans we learn, that the proper and natural aspect which the human family ought ever to have presented to the eyes of the universe is that of the oneness of a flock in close and constant nearness to its Divine Shepherd; that under the disturbing influence of sin, "all we like sheep have gone astray," wandering not only from God, but from each other also; "turning every one into his own way;" that the object of the advent of Christ is to reclaim us from our wanderings, and to restore us to the Divine embrace from which we have been lost; that so intently is the benevolence of God set on our recovery, that ineffably as he had loved the Saviour from eternity, he loves him still more for sustaining our liabilities, and thus setting his paternal compassion free to save us! and that, in reward for that mediation, all who are saved shall form one fold under him, "the great Shepherd of the sheep." So that, in truth, the recovery and union of believers under Christ, is the ultimate design of God in the mediation of his Son.

And with this representation agrees also *the tenor of our Lord's practical teaching.* His favorite topics, of this nature, were humility before God, and a spirit of forbearance and love towards men. And be it remembered that he insisted on the latter as tending to, and expressive of, the former. The same pride which proclaims its independence of God, essays also to insulate itself from man, and to subordinate every thing to its own interest. And the same humility which lies low at the footstool of God, declines to be called "master," and is willing to become the "servant of all."

So far from making his religion the occasion of new contentions, he would have his disciples to "forgive from the heart every one his brother their trespasses"—to proclaim a general amnesty, an act of oblivion of all injuries, a year of jubilee—and that jubilee he would have us to make perpetual. So far from allowing his disciples to draw off, on account of their religion, into separate factions, he would have that religion to bind them in a confederation for securing the peace of the world. And instead of allowing us to go to the throne of grace with a feeling of estrangement from our brethren on account of our religious differences, he would have our religion to operate as the chief incitement to prayer in their behalf. He not only charges us to do for them all the good we can ourselves, but taking us into "our Father's" presence, he invests us with the office of mutual intercessors; empowers us to touch and set in motion, for each other, an almighty agency; making it at once our honor and office to

assist, as subordinate agents, in training and conducting each other to eternal life.

Not satisfied with inculcating mutual affection on his people in general terms, he concentrated and expressed his will on the subject in *a new command.* As the Lawgiver of his Church, possessing all authority in heaven and earth, he was empowered to enact what laws he pleased. But, in the exercise of that high prerogative, the only subject on which he chose formally to legislate was, the mutual affection of his people: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." By calling it a new command, he would be understood as giving it additional solemnity, as incorporating it with the ancient tables, and publishing it as an integral part of the eternal moral law. While to complete its power, and to render its appeal to their hearts irresistible, he proposes his own example as the model and motive to obedience, adding, "as I have loved you, that ye love one another." He might justly have engrossed the love of his people to himself; but, no, he consented to take the love they owe to him, in the form of love to each other. He delighted to contemplate his church as a community of hearts, cemented by attachment to a common object, and thus rendered one.

Not only did he enjoin the duty of mutual affection by a new command, to promote our intelligent obedience he explained the reason in which it is founded; "for," said he, "all ye are brethren"—born into the same family, children of the same heavenly Father, partakers of

the same new nature, and tending to the same eternal home.

The mutual affection which he commended, and the reason of which he thus explained, he also affectingly *exemplified.* Often had his disciples contested the question of precedence in his kingdom. How beautiful, impressive, and instructive the sight which stands before them: —the Lord of glory, folding in his arms a helpless babe, as an emblem of the humility which adorns his kingdom! Thus did he seek both to dry up that fountain of ambition which threatened to embitter the Church, and to inculcate that love which seeketh not her own.

But by what new expedient shall he still further secure this object? Behold him washing his disciples' feet! And why should he thus inculcate the condescending offices of brotherly love, but because he knew that—like the ligaments and arterial net-work of the human frame —the health and happiness of his body, the Church, depends on their binding power and reciprocating influence!

To bind his people together still more effectually, he made their affection to each other the badge of their discipleship to him. "By this," said he, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." Sin is the great principle of repulsion by which men are severed and kept aloof from each other, and led to pursue their respective ends apart. Christ came into the world to be a new centre of attraction, around which they might rally and reunite. So that if there be a community on the face of the earth, distinguished from all others

by the absence of selfishness and the ardor of their love, all who behold them might be constrained to say, "These are certainly the followers of Him whose name is Love."

Having commanded, exemplified, and enforced the mutual affection of his people, he did not leave the performance of the sacred duty to depend on the result of their own prayers alone; —*he prayed himself with an earnestness that would not be denied, that they all might be one.* "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also who shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one." Here the great Intercessor, when only a step from the cross, comprehending his people at a glance in all the nations of the earth, and all the ages of time, prays *that they all may be one*—incorporated in one body, animated by one spirit, united in that love which is the bond of perfectness:—that they may be one *as we are one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee*—closely, spiritually, indissolubly; how intimate and sacred the union of which the mysterious trinity in unity is the heavenly pattern:—that they may be *made perfect in one*, their oneness is necessary to their perfection. Not only is their oneness in each succeeding age necessary to their perfection for the time being, but the final unity of all is necessary to the perfection of the entire body. As it is said of the Jewish church, "that they without us could not be made perfect," so the church in heaven is waiting "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the

fullness of Christ." Such was the specific object for which the Saviour prayed in the presence of the cross, and by which he taught his disciples that they had no separate interests, bound them to each other with the cords of love, and impressed it on them that henceforth and forever he and they were one.

And having so prayed, in order to give efficacy to his intercession, he ascended the cross. Then was the new centre of Divine attraction established. Then was fulfilled the involuntary prediction of Caiaphas, who said, "It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself; but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad"—that operating as the attractive of our hearts to himself, and the centre of our unity to each other, he should form his people into one entire globe of love. Then was commenced the fulfilment of his own prediction, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me,"—detaching them from their separate points of selfishness, where they have stood frowning on each other and me, all eyes and hearts shall meet together by centering in me. His cross, like the ark in the wilderness, is the centre around which his people are to encamp; so that they cannot separate into factions, or withdraw from each other, without retiring at the same time from the presence of the cross.

And the union of his Church, which he had thus lived to inculcate, and died to secure, he still continues to enforce by the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's-supper. "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body:" as the individual is made one by the soul which pervades all the parts of his system and unites them together, so all the members of the Christian Church are pervaded and made one by the one Spirit which inhabits them, and of whose presence baptism is the sign. "And we, being many, are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread;" the *one loaf*, and the *one cup*, of which all partake, however numerous, is an evidence and sign that there is but one body of which they are all members. So that as long as these ordinances are administered in his Church, our Lord is virtually calling on his people to be one. He is reminding them that the image they are to present to the world is that of a holy, happy, united family, entering his house together through the one door of Christian baptism, and sitting down together at a family feast of love.

The visible unity of the Church, which had been thus presignified in the Old Testament, and which had formed so conspicuous a feature in the ministry of our Lord, continued to be enforced by the conduct and writings of the apostles. In confirmation of this statement, let us look through the "Acts of the Apostles," and the Epistles, and we shall find that each, in succession, contemplates, directly or indirectly, the oneness of the Church.

The thousands converted on the day of Pen-

tecost, consisted of "Jews from every nation under heaven;" but, notwithstanding their necessary diversity of objects, characters, and prejudices, the principle which drew them to Christ, drew them so effectually to each other, that "the multitude of them that believed *were of one heart, and of one soul.*" Who does not recognise in that nucleus of the Christian Church—that earliest hour of its existence—a significant intimation of the unity which was intended to fuse and form the faithful of every age and every nation under heaven, into one harmonious and devoted brotherhood?

But, distinguished as the members of that church must have been by almost every variety of prejudice and character, there was yet one important respect in which they met—they were *all Jews.* Although *they* harmonise easily together, will they equally unite with the believing Gentiles? No sooner had Peter beheld the vision which forbade him to "call any man common or unclean"—and "Paul and Silas declared what great things God had wrought by them among the heathen"—than all "the elders and brethren at Jerusalem rejoiced" that "to the Gentiles also God had granted repentance unto life." The enclosure of Jewish restriction was thrown open and broken down, heart met heart, and they who were once afar off, were forthwith introduced and welcomed as "fellow-citizens of the saints and of the household of God."

Having surmounted the first difficulty, however, of receiving the converted Gentile into Christian fellowship, many of the believing Jews

still found it hard to conceive that his state could be *quite* secure unless he joined with them in attaching importance to certain parts of the Mosaic ritual. In opposition to this prejudice, the apostles, especially St. Paul, protested that the great principle of union between Jew and Gentile was the common salvation of Christ: "for he is our peace who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us, ... to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

Now this twofold doctrine—that Jew and Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond and free—all believers, without national, civil, or social distinction, are incorporated into one visible body—and that Christ is the basis and bond of this incorporation—is a subject which imparts an entire character to some of the epistles, and which furnishes a clue to much in nearly all. And it is observable how invariably the inspired penmen take occasion from this subject to insist and enlarge on the obligations of mutual love; and how often they ascend from this point to the contemplation of a union in Christ, which is destined to include, not only the holy of every age and nation, but also of other worlds.

The first of the apostolical epistles is to be found in Acts xv. 23—29; and may be called "an epistle to restore peace." The whole narrative is pertinent and instructive. An attempt is made by certain erring members of the church at Antioch, to compel others to conform to their prejudices. The Christian liberty of a part of the church is invaded, and the peace of

the whole disturbed. Paul and Barnabas, had they obeyed their early prepossessions, would have sided with those who attempted the imposition; but this their fidelity to their Lord, and to Christian liberty, forbade. Or, in the exercise of that high authority which they possessed, and of the great influence they had acquired, they might have put their *veto* on the attempted imposition; but this they forbore, both because they would not lord it over God's heritage, and because they supremely valued the peace and unity of the Christian Church. Humbly consenting in this emergency to form part of a deputation, they hasten to Jerusalem—their sole object, *the Christian liberty and union of the Church.* In the council which was there assembled—the first ever held in the Christian Church—nearly all the official powers of the Church militant met. But their only concern was to obey the dictates of their Lord, and their only aim to preserve the unity of the Church entire. "And to this agree the words of the prophets," said James, "as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, on whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." As if he had said,—the admission of the Gentiles may have outrun *our* expectation, and taken *us* by surprise; but it was a part of the Divine plan before man had breathed, or the world was

made. In pursuance of that plan, the Almighty Architect is now at work, realising the type of the "tabernacle of David" by the erection of his spiritual temple. In every age the glorious fabric has been rising and advancing. The erection has now reached that critical juncture, in which new materials—Gentile converts—are to be collected and employed. "Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble them not"—that we do nothing calculated to disturb the peace, or retard the progress of the spiritual building. "But that we write to them," to the effect that, as we sacrifice our prejudices in pronouncing them, under God, absolved from the rite of circumcision, so they are kindly admonished to abstain, not only from things essentially and universally wrong, but also from things strangled and from blood, that the conscience of the pious Jew may not be wounded.

Accordingly a letter was sent, conceived in the very spirit of conciliation and love, and "laying upon them no greater burden than these necessary things." Such was the nature of the first epistolary offering laid upon the altar of Christian unity. Though it is unostentatiously interwoven with the Scripture narrative, it richly deserves to stand out conspicuously in letters of gold, in the recollection of the Church, as a model, in temper and aim, for all who should subsequently attempt to compose the differences of Christian parties. How admirable was the entire proceeding! Instead of exercising their power to abridge the freedom of the Church, they nobly employ it as the champions of its liberty! The course they advise is

that of mutual concession, and the spirit they breathe that of Christian love. They offer up their own prejudices at the shrine of the Church; and teach us to regard the peace of its members as cheaply purchased, if we can preserve or restore it by imitating their example.

THE EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS.—Dr. Paley, with his usual perspicuity, has shown that the principal object of the argumentative part of this epistle is "to place the Gentile convert upon a parity of situation with the Jewish, in respect of his religious condition, and his rank in the Divine favor." As this was the great question at issue, the apostle, like a wise physician, addresses himself first to the cause of the disease, before he begins the local application. By a variety of arguments, he disabuses both parties of all hopes of salvation from themselves, strips them of their fancied pleas, and shows them to themselves self-condemned and silent before God, while he establishes the great central truth of justification by faith in Christ. Here only could Jew and Gentile alike find peace; and here, in finding peace with God, they became one with each other. The doctrinal part of the epistle reaches to the close of the eleventh chapter. Having, at this point, completed his great argument for Christian unity, he occupies most of the remainder of the epistle in applying it. In chap. xii. he shows that such displays of mercy as Jews and Gentiles had received, should induce them, having first dedicated themselves to God, 1, 2; to think humbly of themselves, 3; to look on all Christians as forming "one body in Christ,"

4, 5; to fill their respective offices in the Church so as most to subserve the general good, 6—8; and to let the law of love flow out into the various channels of cheerfulness, patience, hospitality, mutual sympathy, humility, peacefulness, and a readiness to forgive. In chap xiii. he enforces the universal law of Christian love, 8—10; which turns the whole world into a neighborhood, and the whole Church into a family; and which, so far from "working ill" to any, lives only for the good of all, and so "fulfils the whole law." From chap. xiv. we learn that in things indifferent Christians should not condemn each other, 1; particularly concerning ceremonial observances, 2—6; for Christ alone is the Lord of conscience, 7—9. Instead, therefore, of judging each other, we should prepare for our own judgment at his tribunal, 10—13. Nor should we do any thing, meantime, calculated to distress a weak or tender conscience, lest we "destroy one for whom Christ died," 14—16. Remembering that the kingdom of God consists not in outward things, but in the universal and imperishable elements of "righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost," Christians should "follow after things which make for peace," and rather deny themselves certain privileges than be the means of grieving a weak brother, 17—21.

Continuing this healing strain in chap xv., and thus evincing, by frequent iteration, his deep anxiety to see the Church at one, he exhorts the strong to bear the infirmities of the weak, and each to please not himself but

his neighbor, 1, 2. Reminding Christians that such is the example of Christ, 3, 4; that our gratitude for him should blend all hearts, and call forth a united burst of praise, as if the whole Church were only "one mind, with one mouth glorifying God;" that we should accept each other as Christ has received us, and because of the gracious regard which he has shown to Jews and Gentiles in imparting to them the Gospel according to the tenor of ancient prophecy, 8—17; beseeching them for "Christ's sake," if they will strive, to "strive together in prayer," 30; and praying that "the God of peace" may be with them all, 33. Chap. xvi. beautifully opens with a number of Christian salutations to members of each of the two parties, by which the apostle would set them an example in his own person of mutual and impartial love in Christ, 1—19. And after solemnly warning Christians to "mark them who cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine" of Christ, and to avoid them; and giving an awful description of the character of such, 17, 18; he assures them that "the God of peace" shall soon enable them to trample Satan, the great disturber of the Church, under their feet, 20.

THE FIRST EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.—The very first topic on which the apostle felt himself called to insist, in addressing the members of the church at Corinth, relates to the factions into which they had divided. For no sooner has he expressed his gratitude to God for their affluence in spiritual gifts, than he proceeds to reprove their violent dissensions,

and vindicates himself from having occasioned them, 10—17. And as he well knew that a fond regard for eloquence and philosophy was a principal cause of their divisions, he reminds them how little stress is to be laid on these, since the whole scheme of salvation is constituted on the principle "that no flesh should glory in his presence." Hence the unostentatious style, but yet supernatural character of his own preaching, and of the Gospel generally, chap. ii. And hence, too, the carnality of their "envying, and strife, and divisions," in one saying, "I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos." Chap. iii. 1—4. For he reminds them that he and his fellow-apostles are only instruments employed by God in the erection of the Christian temple; that if any man turns that temple of God into a Babel by unhallowed clamors and divisions, "him will God destroy;" and that as the Church is one, so all good is made indivisible and one, and as such, is the property of the believer in Christ, 5—23. Let them on every account, then, allay their proud and factious spirit, and he would come shortly to examine and correct the abuses which had crept in among them, chap. iv.

But earnestly as the apostle would inculcate the unity of the Christian Church, not less is he concerned for its purity. Indeed he enforces the latter in order to the former. For, if he pauses in the inculcation of unity at the close of the fourth chapter, it is only that, having denounced the sins of incest, pride, litigiousness, fornication, and giving various directions concerning marriage, virginity, idolatrous fel-

lowship, and decorum in public worship, in the following six chapters, he may return to the subject of Christian union again in the eleventh chapter, with still greater effect. That this is his scope is evident, first, from his interspersed exhortations that no man should use his Christian liberty so as to wound the conscience of a brother, chap. viii. 9—13; his accommodation of himself to the prejudices of men in order to bring about their salvation, ix. 18—23, and x. 32, 33; his representation that "we, though many, are one bread and one body," x. 17; and, secondly, from his resuming the subject of schism as of primary importance, as soon as ever he has corrected their other irregularities. "For, first of all," saith he, "when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you," xi. 18. Having endeavored to heal this schism as far as it related to the ordinance of the Lord's-supper, he proceeds to the subject of spiritual gifts, and shows that however great the diversities of these gifts may be, they all proceed from the same Divine source, and are intended for the benefit of the same body in which all Christians are united. "For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." Chap. xii. 1—14. Inculcating humility and mutual affection in the use of those gifts, he pursues the similitude of the human body still further, represents Christians as so united in one body as to have a perfect identity of interests, and insists on a tender care of the least member, on

account of its subserviency to the good of the whole, 14—31.

But that which is of far greater importance to the welfare and unity of the Christian Church, than the greatest opulence of gifts, *is evangelical love.* This paramount principle, by its humble, hallowed, enduring, and sympathetic influence, binds the whole Church together, and assimilates earth to heaven, chap. xiii. Therefore let Christians "follow after charity," xiv. 1; and "all things" in the church will "be done decently and in order," 40. In chap. xv. he extinguishes an incipient heresy by a masterly argument on the resurrection; exhorts them, instead of dividing into factions, to unite and enlarge their hearts for the relief of the poor Christians at Jerusalem, xvi. 1—4; and to let all their "things be done with charity," 14; concluding with the impartial and catholic benediction, "My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen," 24.

THE SECOND EPISTLE TO THE CORINTHIANS.—In this epistle, the great desire of the apostle is to present the church at Corinth "as a chaste virgin to Christ," xi. 2; his great "fear, lest when he came . . . . he should find debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults," xii. 20; his final admonition, that they "be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace," xiii. 11: and his last assurance that "the God of love and peace should be with them," 11.

THE EPISTLE TO THE GALATIANS.—Soon after St. Paul had planted "the churches of

Galatia," their harmony and orthodoxy were impaired by the seductive influence of a Judaizing zealot. Having repelled his errors, principally, by demonstrating that Christ alone is the ground of our justification before God, he affirms that all the temporary distinctions of the Mosaic economy are merged, and that all believers alike "are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus; . . . for ye are all one in Christ Jesus," iii. 26—29. And having thus shown the superiority of the Gospel to Judaism, and its power to make all one, he inculcates love as the fulfilling of the only law that remains, v. 13, 14; warns them against those evil propensities of the flesh so fatal to the peace and oneness of the Church, and among which "hatred, variance, and emulations," are conspicuous; and enforces the cultivation of those fruits of the Spirit which assimilate the Church on earth to the Church in heaven, v. 15—26.

Epistle to the Ephesians.—As St. Paul was now a prisoner at Rome, in consequence of having provoked the Jews, by affirming that the observance of the Mosaic ritual was not essential to salvation, he may be regarded as the suffering champion of the liberty and union of the Church. As the church at Ephesus had been planted by his instrumentality, he had been apprehensive lest advantage should be taken of his imprisonment to unsettle the minds of its Gentile members. But finding they were at present united and firm in the faith, he seems to exult in his freedom from the necessity of controversy, and soars with a wing

which sweeps the whole horizon of the Church, mounts from earth to heaven, and passes from the Ephesian church to the final consummation of all things. Entering at once on his favorite theme—the oneness of the Church—he discloses, with the first stroke of his inspired pen, the sublime design of God in the economy of the Gospel—"that in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him;" chap. i. 10—and then unveils the throne of Christ on the summit of creation, where the Father hath exalted him "far above all principality and power . . . and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church, which is his body," 21—23. To fill the Ephesians with the liveliest gratitude, they are led back, in thought, to the mouth of hell where God had found them; are shown the hand of grace conducting them to Christ who sprinkles them with his blood, ii. 13; to the temple where he is seen breaking down the wall of partition between Jew and Gentile "to make in himself, of twain, one new man, so making peace," 14, 15; baptising them with "one Spirit," 18; naturalising, and making them free of the great Christian commonwealth; and building them all into "a holy temple," so "harmoniously connected" as to be made indivisible, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone," 19—22.

For the full and fearless assertion of this sublime truth, which was too vast for the narrow minds of his bigoted countrymen, the

apostle was now "a prisoner," chap. iii. 1. But so far from disparaging it on this account, he would "make all men see it," 9; and all worlds admire it, 10; and prays that the Ephesians especially may comprehend it;—bowing his knees for this end "unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"—not *families*, as if each order formed a distinct household—but "family," because, however numerous and diversified, they are all one in Christ. Nor can he conclude this chapter without an ardent breathing that the whole Church, without one jarring note, would employ itself, through Christ, in one perpetual song of praise to God, 14—21.

Now as all true Christians, and all holy intelligences are thus intimately united, the apostle entreats the Ephesians to "keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," iv. 1—3; reminding them, as a most powerful motive, that the entire Church constitutes but "one body," is pervaded by "one Spirit," and animated by "one hope;" and that there is only "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism," 4—6. However distinguished from each other by the various offices and gifts bestowed by Christ on his enthronement, this variety is intended, not to separate, but to unite and complete them, 7—13. For as the human body is formed and matured by the union of all the members to each other under the head, and by the fitness of each member for its own office and place in the body, so the Church is formed and matured by the union of all its members

under Christ its head, and by the sympathy of every part with the whole, 7—16. Let Christians then distinguish themselves from the rest of the world by "putting away" all the malevolent passions, and by practising the most difficult duties of charity, till they all walk in love as the "dear children" of him whose name is Love, 31, 32; chap. v. 1, 2. Indeed, the domestic circle is, in this respect, to copy the mutual subjection, sympathy, and union of the Christian Church. For so closely are we united to him and to each other, that "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. Let the husband and the wife, then, behold in their own union, and in the love they owe to each other, memorials of the "great mystery . . . . concerning Christ and the Church," 21—32.

THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS.—Whatever the immediate occasion of this epistle may have been, the tenderest fears of the apostle had been alarmed at hearing that the peace of the flourishing little church at Philippi was disturbed. The wound inflicted, indeed, does not appear to have been deep, but, oh, with what inimitable tenderness does he attempt to heal it. What pathos can exceed the yearning of his soul when entreating that church, "if there be any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind?" an entreaty which he most touchingly enforces by the condescension and love of their Divine Redeemer, ii. 1—

11. Let them, therefore, "beware . . . beware . . . beware," of those factious and turbulent persons who had disturbed their Christian peace, by furiously contending for the observance of the Jewish ritual. In opposition to all such pretences, let them copy his own example by fixing their entire dependence on Christ, and aiming at the loftiest attainments in piety, iii. 1—14. This is the point in which all Christians are agreed; and being agreed on that which is of primary importance, they should allow each other a latitude of amicable difference on that which is only of subordinate import; let them do this, and even their subordinate differences will soon disappear, 15, 16. Descending to particulars, the apostle entreats two individuals—between whom probably the dissension had existed—"that they be of the same mind in the Lord;" exhorts the whole church to let their moderation—επιεικες, mutual forbearance and self-command, be universally apparent, as they would not be found sunk in self-indulgence, or embroiled in quarrels, at the coming of Christ; and promising them that God shall be with them as the God of peace, iv. 1—9.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.—The garden of the Lord at Colosse, hitherto "fruitful in every good work," was now beginning to be overrun with the weeds of Rabbinism and Platonism, together with the tenets and practices of the Essenes. Though there is no positive evidence that the apostle had enjoyed the honor of planting it, his assistance is desired to correct and remove the evils which infested it.

In order, at once, to confirm their faith, enlarge their views, and promote their union, he opens to them the supreme and universal headship of Christ, i. 15—20. Here, first, as in the epistle to the Ephesians, all orders of holy intelligences are represented as collected, subordinated, and united under the mediatorial reign of Christ; even the angels who, as faithful subjects, had been morally arrayed against rebellious man, are now reconciled to us, and made one. And, here, secondly, descending to the Church on earth, the Jews and Gentiles—between whom an irreconcileable difference had hitherto subsisted—appear harmonised together. To see that union in Christ universal, the apostle *agonised* in desire and effort, ii. 1, 2. To prevent their disunion, he entreats them to beware of all the errors of men "not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands, having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God," 19. For the Church of Christ, so far from originating new distinctions, is intended to merge and efface old ones, for "Christ is all, and in all." And then, thirdly, narrowing the subject still farther, till he had brought all its practical weight to bear on the particular church he was addressing, the apostle beautifully and emphatically sums up all in the exhortation, "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And *over*

all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful," iii. 11—15.

THE FIRST AND SECOND EPISTLES TO THE THESSALONIANS.—The church at Thessalonica was the abode of peace. Here the voice of faction had never been heard: nor had the Holy Spirit of God been grieved by the least disturbance of that sacred calm in which he loves to dwell. All was tranquillity, unity, and love. We should not have been surprised, therefore, if the apostle, in writing to its members, had omitted to introduce his favorite theme, and had confined himself entirely to the immediate object of his epistle. But, no; so greatly is he delighted with the "good tidings" of their "faith and charity," that he stops to exult in it, and longs to witness it, iii. 6—11. As if, however, no degree of union of which the Church is capable on earth were close enough to satisfy his heavenly conceptions of Christian oneness, he prays, "the Lord make you to *increase and abound* in love one towards another, and towards all men," 12. Nor yet is his avarice of love satisfied: for, saith he, "as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another. And indeed ye do it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia; *but we beseech you, brethren, that ye increase more and more*," iv. 9, 10. Divine as their love was in its origin, mutual as it was in its exercise, and comprehensive as it was in

its embraces, taking in all the brethren of all the other churches in all Macedonia, he would yet see it enlarge in its objects, and increase in its ardor, till it had encircled and bound the whole Church into one compacted globe of love. And that nothing might ever occur to retard their progress towards so glorious a consummation, he charges them to exercise affection and reverence towards their Christian teachers; watchfulness and sympathy towards each other; and patience and beneficence towards all, v. 13—15.

His second epistle is intended to correct a partial misapprehension of the first. Yet so far is he from omitting the mention of Christian unity that, although nothing had occurred meantime to disturb it, he makes it the first subject of exulting gratitude to God, i. 3; and the last subject of earnest prayer, "Now the Lord of peace himself give you peace always by all means," iii. 16.

THE EPISTLES TO TIMOTHY.—The character and office of Timothy would necessarily invest him with great influence. Having to "do the work of an evangelist," he would be constantly moving among the churches; the apostle therefore was anxious that, among other objects, he should move in the ecclesiastical firmament like a star, connecting, and cheering, and shedding a benign influence on them all. For this end, he charges him to avoid the subtle distinctions, and endless logomachies, which were beginning to obtain among those professing godliness, as unprofitable in themselves, and fatal to the peace of the Church, 1 Epist. i. 4; vi. 20;

2 Epist. ii. 23; predicts the arrival of times when the Church would be infested with all the elements of formality, heresy, schism, and apostacy, 2 Epist. iii. 1—9; iv. 3, 4; and exhorts Timothy to avoid such "self-willed," "fierce," "evil men and seducers," as pests of the Church, 1 Epist. i. 6, 7; vi. 3—5; to follow after charity, 1 Epist. vi. 11; 2 Epist. ii. 22; to be an example of charity, 1 Epist. iv. 12; to look on charity as "the end of the commandment"—the complement or fulfilment of the law, 1 Epist. i. 6; and to regard a spirit of love as an indispensable qualification in all those whom he assisted to place in any of the offices of the Christian Church, 1 Epist. iii. 2, 3; 2 Epist. ii. 24, 25. And he also distinctly intimates what the Church should be; not an arena of controversy, where every word is a weapon; not a battle-field, where one side speaks only to breathe defiance against the other; but "a house," 1 Epist. iii. 15; 2 Epist. ii. 20, 21; "the house of God," of which the Jewish temple was an emblem; and in which all the family of God, so far from contending among themselves, should unite and make common cause for the conversion of the world; that "all men," in answer to the "supplications, prayers, and intercessions," offered up through "one Mediator," "who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time," might join them as members of the same happy family, 1 Epist. ii. 1—6.

The Epistle to Titus.—In the Epistle to Titus, the same duties are inculcated relative to the peace and unity of the Church as in the

epistles to Timothy. If the affectionate union of believers is a blessing to be jealously preserved, how important that the teachers and officers of the Christian Church should in their own persons abstain from all acrimonious contentions, should exemplify a spirit imbued with the gentleness and benevolence of Christ, and should inculcate the same spirit upon others. Accordingly, the apostle, ever provident of the harmony and welfare of the Church, directs Titus to avoid that fruitful source of altercation the Jewish controversy, i. 14; iii. 9; instructs him that a bishop must "not be self-willed, not soon angry, but . . . . a lover of good men," *φιλαγαθον*, *a lover of goodness*, wherever he finds it, i. 7, 8; and charges him to enforce on Christians "to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing meekness unto all men, iii. 2; urging the duty by the consideration of their own former depravity, and of the amazing scheme of mercy by which "God our Saviour" has redeemed us.

THE EPISTLE TO PHILEMON.—The epistle of St. Paul to Philemon, though written only to a private Christian on a private subject, contains principles which, if expanded, would fill the universal Church with love. Like a cool and balmy leaf fresh plucked from the tree of life, it is presented by an apostolic hand to heal a chafed and perturbed spirit. It is almost impossible to peruse it, without catching the melting tenderness and healing spirit which it breathes. The very occasion which produced it conveys a lesson which, so far from permitting a spirit of altercation and division in our-

selves, teaches us to do all we can to allay animosities, and to reconcile others who are at variance. But this lesson is more than implied. For though there is but one topic of gratitude introduced, that one is the love which unites each Christian with every other, and blends the whole into one Church, 4—7.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.—The design of the sacred writer in this epistle is to demonstrate the pre-eminence of Christ, to infer the necessary superiority of the Christian to the Jewish dispensation, and to exhibit the consequent absurdity and guilt of leaving the former for the sake of the latter. But one of the excellences of the Mosaic economy was, that it organised all its members into a united "commonwealth," or Church. The apostle therefore shows that the Gospel does the same in a superior manner. All Christians are "brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling;" forming "a house," or great temple-structure, of which Moses himself is only a living stone, while Christ is the Builder; over the Christian house, Christ is supreme, uniting in his individual person the offices which in the Jewish economy were distributed among many, and thus giving to his Church one unchangeable centre, iii. 1—6. Especially is he to be regarded as the "High Priest over the house of God," so much superior in every respect to the Aaronic priesthood, that all Christians are laid under the weightiest obligations entirely to confide in him, to cultivate purity, to hold fast their profession, exhort and help each other, and to maintain Christian communion, x. 21—

25. Indeed, the Christian Church is not only united in its own members, it is a constituent part of that great organic body of which the Jewish church itself is only an integral part; and which will not be considered complete till the believers of all dispensations are gathered into one perfect Church, xi. 40. Being therefore encompassed with so great a cloud of witnesses, let them see us, among other things, "follow after peace with all men"—Jews and Gentiles—one on earth as they are one in heaven. Let us even regard the Church militant as having come to the Church triumphant so as to form one general assembly like that of the Jews at Sinai or on Sion, xii. 22—24. And having been introduced into the final dispensation—"a kingdom which cannot be moved," 28; let us recognise the identity of our interets, "let brotherly love continue," xiii. 1—3. For "here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come," 14. Let all Christian pastors and people look on themselves as forming one flock, to which "the Great Shepherd" is related by "the blood of the everlasting covenant;" and "the God of peace" will bring them to perfection, 20, 21.

The General Epistle of James.—In this epistle we hear a new voice lifted up to hush the troubled elements of the Church. "The twelve tribes scattered abroad" were not only exposed to the persecutions of an apostate world, but were also in danger of being wasted by errors and evils among themselves. To staunch the bleeding wounds of the Church, the Apostle James exhorts them, among other

duties, to remember the equalising tendency of the Gospel in a moral respect between the rich and the poor, chap. i. 9, 10; to receive the word of God with meekness, and to reduce it to practice, avoiding that fierce and fiery zeal which would fill the Church with flames for the honor of God; and remembering that practical religion consists in personal purity and relative benevolence, 19—27. He charges them to show no partiality inconsistent with the Gospel of Christ; declares that such partiality is a breach of the royal law of love, ii. 1—9; and insists on the insufficiency of any faith which does not work by love, 14—26. He cautions them, therefore, against ambitiously assuming the office of teachers; enlarges on the fatal effects of an unbridled tongue; and urges a candid, benevolent disposition, guarding them against censoriousness and animosities; and against that love of the world which tends to produce them, iii., iv., 1—5. And then reminding them that to "speak evil of a brother, and to judge him," is to usurp the prerogative of God and to affront the high authority of his law, 11; the apostle once more cautions them to "grudge not one against another, v. 9, but mutually to unbosom themselves in social confession; to become intercessors for each other at the throne of grace; and, instead of leaving a wanderer from the truth to perish, to try the mighty efficacy of prayer for his conversion. Thus would the apostle awaken in each believer a generous interest for all the rest, and have him to regard himself as an appointed guardian of the whole. Is it the sublime dec-

laration of Christ that of all which the Father hath given him he will lose nothing? in an inferior sense, the individual Christian is not only to watch over the welfare and safety of the entire Church, but, according to the apostle James, he is never to see a solitary wanderer from the fold of Christ without wrestling in prayer with God for his recovery; that he being restored to the Church, the Church may be restored to its entireness.

THE GENERAL EPISTLES OF PETER.—All the Christians "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, having purified their souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren," are here exhorted to "love one another with a pure heart fervently;" being born again into the same spiritual family, i. 1—22, 23. Laying aside all those evil dispositions which would keep them at a distance from God and from each other, they are to come to Christ the living foundation, that, as living stones, they might be built up on him and united to each other, with all the compactness and oneness of a spiritual temple. In this temple—by an easy transition of metaphor—they are ordained to officiate harmoniously together at the altar of God. For, in a sense far superior to Israel of old, they "are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people"—titles which imply the greatest similarity and the closest union, ii. 1—10. He exhorts them, therefore, "be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another; love as brethren," iii. 8—11. And again he repeats, "*above all things* have fer-

vent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover the multitude of sins"—throwing its mantle over them, and hiding them from public view; while he would have all the gifts and graces of each placed as in a common fund, and employed for the benefit of the whole, iv. 8—11.

The same φιλαδελφια, or, love of the brethren, so earnestly inculcated in the first epistle, is urged again in the very opening exhortation of the second, and placed among the highest attainments of Christian excellence. For when all diligence has been given to acquire faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, and godliness—brotherly-kindness and charity are essential to use, embellish, and crown the whole, i. 5—7.

THE EPISTLES OF JOHN.—On the first of these epistles, three preliminary remarks deserve attention. First, its *title* as a *catholic* epistle: reminding us that as it is inscribed without limitation to the universal Church, all the members of that Church are supposed to be one on the great principles which it inculcates. This remark, indeed, might have been made, in a qualified sense, concerning the three preceding epistles. But this epistle is not inscribed, as they are, to the faithful of a particular class, but addressed to the Church universal to the end of time. Second, its avowed and specific *design*—"these things write we unto you that ye also may have fellowship with us;" implying that Christian benevolence is not exclusive but expansive, and that it pants to behold the entire body of the faithful in fellow-

ship. And, thirdly, its *pervading spirit of affection*, worthy of him who leaned on the bosom of incarnate compassion, and meriting for it the name of "a treatise of love." Here, the Church is a temple, the God of which is love; the services of which are love; and in which all the assembly are "little children," listening to the paternal breathings of a patriarchal apostle, entreating them with the reiterations and overflowings of tender importunity to "love one another."

On the unity of the Christian Church this epistle is decisive. It teaches us that "fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ," is fellowship with each other, i. 1—4. After repeating the "old" and "new commandment," it pronounces a want of brotherly love to be utterly incompatible with walking "in the light," ii. 9—11. "For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that ye love one another:" from which the apostle takes occasion to denounce the man who hates his brother as a murderer; to show that brotherly love is essential to prove that we have passed from death unto life; and that our love, instead of being professional merely, should induce us liberally to relieve the distressed, and even if necessary to die for them; urging it by the consideration that Christ died for us, iii. 10—23. He states that one of the criterions by which antichrist is known is by the absence of brotherly love; and enforces mutual affection from the love of God in giving his Son to die for sinners, and from that sense of consistency which requires that he who loves God, love his

brother also, iv. 7—21. Besides which, if we are born of God we shall love all those who, like ourselves, have been begotten of him; so that brotherly love is an essential sign of regeneration, v. 1—3. Indeed, in one chapter the apostle sums up the whole of evangelical duty by declaring, "this is the commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment," iii. 23. And in the following he intimates, that all relative religion is comprised in "this commandment, That he who loveth God love his brother also," iv. 21.

The *second epistle* of John is an epitome of the first; in which he earnestly enforces "the commandment which we had from the beginning, that we love one another," 5.

From the *third epistle* we learn that kindness to Christians, as such, engages the Divine commendation, while a spirit of turbulence, slander, and overbearing ambition in the Church, incurs the Divine displeasure, 5—11.

The General Epistle of Jude.—In this epistle we are taught that there is a "common salvation;" that for the preservation of this chartered gift, in which all Christians have an equal interest, we are earnestly to contend; that self-willed, contentious, scandalous professors, relinquish their interest in it, and "separate themselves," by so doing, from the true Church; and that Christians, considering their exposure to this danger, and its consequences, should make common cause, labor to secure their own confirmation in faith and love, do nothing to hasten the fall of the erring, but,

on the contrary, "save them with fear, pulling them out of the fire."

REVELATION.—In this mysterious book, the Christian Church, under whatever aspect she appears, is represented as one. Assailed by persecution, she is seen as "a woman" fleeing "into the wilderness," xii. 1. When assailed by another form of evil, the Church is "a camp" and "a city," xx. 9. In a state of distinguished prosperity, she is "the bride, the Lamb's wife," xxi. 9. And when enjoying her final triumph, one song engages and unites every voice of saints and angels; one vision of glory "in the midst of the throne" attracts every eye; and one spot before the throne receives their several crowns.

By indulging thus freely in Scripture quotation, and attempting so extended an analysis of the inspired epistles, the end gained is manifold. We are thus taking our cause, at once, into the only court in the universe competent to pronounce on its merits; and, while yet standing on the threshold, we are bowing in reverential homage to its supreme authority. We are acquainting ourselves with the ample space which it occupies in the word of God; with the impressive manner in which it is there introduced, and the hallowed spirit in which it is treated; while we see how constantly the subject occupied the mind of the Son of God; how regularly it presented itself to the minds of his apostles when bowing at the throne of grace, or when writing, under a higher dictation, to the primitive churches; of what vast importance it must be in the estimation of that Holy

senting letters, dictated by the Spirit, and inscribed to "*all* them that are in Christ Jesus."

The third compartment represents particular churches; some of which are receiving apostolic congratulations on their union and prosperity; others, are evidently listening with ominous delight to the whispers of slander, and the plausible sophistries of error, while friendly and anxious countenances are turned on them in warning, expostulation, and pity; and others have separated into factious groups, and converted the sanctuary into an arena of angry debate, from which the grieved Spirit of love is departing, and where an infernal hand is seen scattering abroad firebrands, arrows, and death. Among each of these classes are messengers inspired from heaven, reminding them that they have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism;" showing them that they cannot indulge in mutual mistrust or aversion without bursting one or other of the cords of love which constitute the bond of peace; praying for the reconciliation and reunion of such as are alienated; weeping over the obstinacy of that alienation, or else rejoicing in its removal; pointing them to the cross as the magnet of all hearts; and showing them that by coming to it they have come to the rendezvous of all the just, to the general assembly and Church of the first-born whose names are written in heaven. What other impression then can we derive from the survey than this, that unity is a sign of the true Church, and that so complete is this unity, that the atom does not more certainly form an integral portion of the material universe than the

meanest and obscurest believer has his appointed place and portion in the one great family which is gathering together in Christ? so that unscripturally to expel a single Christian, or to disturb the harmony of a single church, is to break the peace of the universe.

CHAPTER II.

THE NATURE OF CHRISTIAN UNITY; OR, WHEREIN THE ONENESS OF THE CHURCH CONSISTS.

From the preceding examination of Scripture it appears, that unity is one of the essential characteristics of the Christian Church. We proceed to inquire, in the next place, what we are to understand by that unity which is thus represented as blending all the faithful into one community.

I. And here it is natural for us to glance, first, at some of the ideas which have more or less obtained, and at the attempts which at different times have been made in the Church to realise this union. For if, on bringing them to the test of Scripture, either of them shall prove in accordance with that only standard, our inquiry will be ended, and our object gained; if, however, when weighed in the Divine balances, they are found wanting, we shall be justified in dismissing them entirely from our minds, and our way will be cleared for further inquiry.

1. Some have sought to unite the Church by equalising all its members in every respect; by establishing an ultra-democracy which should

dispense with all official distinctions, and consequent subordination. But, besides that no society can exist without order, and order supposes discipline, and discipline government, it is evident that the Christian union inculcated in Scripture is quite compatible with the greatest diversity of official distinctions, and of spiritual gifts. For not only did our ascended Lord give "some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;" but he gave them expressly to promote the union and welfare of his body the Church—gave them "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ." And that some, at least, of these offices were not intended to be confined to the primitive Church is evident, for they are to be continued "till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Official distinctions in the Church then consist with its perfect oneness, and are essential to it.

Others have professed to unite the Church by adopting the opposite extreme. Taking the platform of the military government of Rome* for its model, and, indeed, in many respects, taking its place, the Romish church built up, in hierarchal order, a towering structure of ecclesiastical grandeur, gradation above gradation —a living pyramid—on whose summit was enthroned a ruling mind, and at whose base

* See Cave's Primitive Christianity.

stretched out the kneeling and obedient world. This was spiritual despotism, in its "pride of place," mistaking professed submission for vital union. But even that submission was only apparent; for, as we shall hereafter have occasion to show, the elements of resistance and repulsion were so often in activity, that—strange anomaly!—the world was occasionally called in to give peace to the Church. Had that submission to the Pope, however, instead of being only apparent and partial, been universal and complete, the power that enforced it would still have wanted that *sine qua non* of all official authority in the Church—the warrant of its Divine Head. But had he willed a unity of this nature, his apostles would of course have enjoined and enforced it. Yet when discoursing expressly on the unity of the Church, concerning such a constitution they are silent. They even specify the nature of the fellowship they enjoin—that it is to consist of faith, of love, and of common obedience to the will of Christ—but not a word do they utter concerning a universal government under one visible head. So far were they from connecting together the churches of various lands, by the appointment of one official head, that they did not connect together, *in this way*, the churches even of the same province. Indeed, the state of the political world, at the time, rendered the subjection of the universal Church to one visible head, utterly impracticable. And when in process of time that mockery of a union was attempted, it excited the earnest deprecation of

some of those who were apparently most interested in its success.*

In some periods and sections of the Church, attempts have been made to blend Christians into one body by enforcing universally the same discipline, government, and ceremonies of worship. This was mistaking uniformity for union. This our Lord himself forbore; and forbore as inconsistent with the universal design of his new economy. For, while a minute and unbending ritual, like that of the Jewish, is admirably adapted to *distinguish* a people from the rest of the world, the system that proposes to *unite* all nations in a common brotherhood, should possess the simplicity and self-adjusting nature of a general principle. Accordingly, our Lord, having discharged us from the cares and vexatious obligations of the ancient ceremonial, enacts a code of more generous authority, prescribes only that which is absolutely necessary, and leaves us to learn our duty from facts

* Ego autem fidenter dico, &c. "I confidently affirm," says Gregory I., (*lib.* 6., *Ep.* 30.) "that whoever calls himself Universal Bishop, or desires to be so called, is a forerunner of antichrist, because he proudly sets himself above all others." *See also denunciations of the same attempt at supremacy, in his 4th, 6th, and 7th Epistles.*

"Oh that there were none of this presidency!" exclaims Gregory Nazianzen, (*Orat* 28,) "none of this pre-eminence of place, and arrogant aiming at prerogative!" Superbum nimis est, &c. "It is too arrogant and immoderate for any one to pass beyond his own proper sphere, and in despite of antiquity to invade the rights of others, and assail the primacies of so many metropolitans for the purpose of aggrandising the dignity of one."—*Leo*, I., *Ep.* 55.

and examples, rather than from formal precepts. Treading in the footsteps of their Lord, the apostles exhibited the same noble superiority, where principle was not concerned, to all the detail of ecclesiastical observance. With the Jewish Christian, they could shave the head and practice circumcision; and with the Gentile Christian they could disparage both.* The same hand that adjusted the yoke on the neck of the former, because he believed he ought to wear it, tenderly and promptly removed it from the latter, because his conscience was galled by the imposition. Thus evincing, that unbroken uniformity of discipline and ceremonies is by no means essential to Christian union.†

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* "And this so continued, that fifteen Christian bishops, in succession, were circumcised, even until the destruction of Jerusalem, under Adrian, as Eusebius reports. . . . . God tolerated them in their error, till time and a continual dropping of the lessons and dictates apostolical did wear it out. . . . . And in the descent of so many years, I find not any one anathema passed . . . . . upon any one of the bishops of Jerusalem or the believers of the circumcision; and yet it was a point as clearly determined . . . . . as any of those questions that at this day vex and crucify Christendom."—*Jeremy Taylor's Liberty of Prophesying.*

† Actum suum disponit et dirigit unusquisque Episcopus, &c. (*Cyp. Ep.* 52.) Every bishop orders and directs his own acts, having to render an account of his proceedings to the Lord.

The conscience of his people assisting, (sub populi assistentis conscientia, *Ep.* 78,) every bishop hath in the government of his church the free power of his will, having to render an account of his own act unto the Lord. (*Ep.* 72.)

"This Αυτονομια, and liberty of churches, doth ap-

And attempts have been made also to find this union in identity of opinion on all points of faith and practice.* But while, as we shall presently show, there are certain essential requisites, without which a man cannot be a Christian, and without which a society cannot be a church, yet beyond these central truths

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pear to have long continued in practice inviolate; although tempered and modelled in accommodation to the circumstances of time and place."—*Barrow's Discourse concerning the Unity of the Church.* But that the difference of observances which this liberty occasioned was regarded as perfectly compatible with Christian union, see Aug. *Ep.* 86. Cyp. *Ep.* 75. Iren. *apud* Euseb v. 24. Socr. v. 22; vii. 19.

* "The first Christians used no written Creed; the Confession of Faith which was held necessary for salvation, was delivered to children or converts, by word of mouth, and intrusted to their memory. Moreover, in the several independent churches, the rule of faith was liable to some slight changes, according to the opinion and discretion of the Bishop presiding in each. Hence it arose, that when the creeds of those numerous communities came at length to be written and compared together, they were found to contain some variations; this was natural and necessary; but when we add, that those variations were for the most part merely verbal, and in no instance involved any question of essential importance, we advance a truth which will seem strange to those who are familiar with the angry disputations of later ages. But the fact is easily accounted for—the earlier pastors of the Church drew their belief from the Scripture itself, as delivered to them by writing or preaching, and they were contented to express that belief in the language of Scripture. They were not curious to investigate that which is not clearly revealed, but they adhered firmly and faithfully to that which they *knew* to be true; therefore their variations were without schism, and their differences without acrimony."—*Waddington's Church History.*

there is a large circle where opinion is allowed to walk at large, and where Christian charity finds an appropriate sphere for bearing, believing, and hoping all things. Diversity of opinion on many points is not only to be accounted for, but is even *necessitated* by differences of mental constitution, by varieties of education, by the influence of early and peculiar associations, and by a thousand other causes too subtle to be traced, and too personal and unique to be described; and is only in harmony with all the works of Him who combines the greatest variety of accident and form with unity of principle and design. So that if the man does not relinquish his rationality on becoming a Christian, but retains his right to use it; and if a church is to be a society of *thinking* as well as of "faithful" men, a perfect and universal identity of sentiment is neither to be expected nor desired. Nor does the Bible demand it. This is evident from the language of the apostle in his epistle to the Romans. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations. For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him who eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him."* Here are two classes of Christians—in the same church—differing on a doubtful point. And the fact to be remarked is, that the apostle does not disclose which was right by deciding the question at issue. But, denouncing their mu-

* Rom. xiv. 1—3.

tual want of charity, he approves the conscientiousness of each; encourages both to retain their respective opinions; and exhorts them, notwithstanding this diversity, to be united and one; assigning as the great reason why each should receive the other, that GOD HATH RECEIVED HIM.

In his epistle to the Philippians, he treats a similar difference, in a similar way. "Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded; and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, *whereto we have already attained*, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing."* From which we learn that up to a certain point they agreed; that beyond that point they differed; that by walking harmoniously together as far as they agreed, they might hope, by aid from on high, to see the point of coincidence extended farther and farther. The great lesson, therefore, which the Church is to infer is, that perfect identity of sentiment is not necessary to Christian union, but that Christian union is necessary, or, at least, eminently conducive to that coincidence of opinion.

II. Now if none of these plans is Christian unity, nor essential to it, let us inquire, in the next place, wherein does it consist. And we observe, first, that the foundation of a scriptural union among Christians is laid in the belief of those truths which are essential to our union with Christ. Here, we presume, the following propositions will be admitted as soon as read;

* Phil. iii. 15, 16.

—that Christianity, in common with every other system, contains some principles which serve at once to identify and distinguish it;—that as the inculcation of morality is not peculiar to the Gospel, its essence must be sought for in that in which it is peculiar—in being a remedial system, a provision of mercy for a sinful world through a Divine Mediator; and that as Christianity is a provision of mercy, its fundamental truths may be expected to be few and simple, if only to be in accordance with its kind and compassionate design.

But how are these truths, few and simple as they may be, to be discriminated and determined? Had this question never engaged our attention before, we should naturally adopt some or all of the following methods; we should inquire whether, on a devout and careful perusal of the Gospel as a whole, Christians generally have received an *identity* of impression as to its scope and design;—whether it contained within its pages any thing professing to be an epitome or abridgment of the system which it reveals;—whether the apostolic preaching contained any one leading feature;—or, whether the question of *fundamental truth* was ever agitated in apostolic times, and determined by apostolic authority. Now, on adopting this course of inquiry, we not only obtain replies; and these replies not merely agree; but, by the unanimous verdict of the orthodox Church, they all prove to be *one;* and that one, *the doctrine of justification by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ.*

Let us hear the final commission which our

Lord gave to his apostles when he charged them with the duty of evangelising the world; —they were to "preach *repentance, and the remission of sins, in his name*, among all nations." If we inquire of St. Paul the subject of his preaching, he replies, "Christ, and him crucified;" or, the substance of apostlic preaching generally, his answer is still the same,—"*we* preach Christ crucified;" and the reason assigned is, that "he is made of God unto us, wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption." The prevailing impression of the Christian Church is, that the New Testament is, in brief, "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners:" and this, too, is its own compendium of itself.

But if ever the apostle referred to the fundamental truth of the Gospel, it was surely when he uttered the fearful anathema, "If we, or an angel from heaven, *preach any other Gospel* unto you than that which we have preached, let him be accursed." Now here the point to be remarked is, that the Galatians had not renounced the Christian profession;—they still retained the doctrines they had been taught;—but *some part* of those doctrines they were in danger of surrendering to false teachers;—and that part is considered by the apostle as so fundamental, that he puts it for the whole Gospel. What then is that vital and essential truth, the belief of which amounts to a belief of the Gospel, and the rejection of which, either by a Christian or a church, is a rejection of Christianity? Let us seek an answer by inquiring,

what was that counter-doctrine for which the Galatians were in danger of renouncing this fundamental truth? The entire drift of the apostolic argument shows that it was *justification by the works of the law.* In opposition to this fundamental error it is that the apostle affirms the fundamental truth, "*Christ* hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us:" fearfully denouncing the teacher of the antagonist error, to whatever order of beings he might belong, and from whatever region of space he may come, as a subverter of the entire Gospel; and declaring concerning every man who seeks justification through any other medium, "that Christ can profit him nothing." Here again, then, we meet the one grand doctrine in question; so that from whatever point of the circle we may commence our search, we find this to be the central truth; and however we may vary the inquiry, "What is truth; fundamental truth?" the reponse of the living oracle is invariably the same, *Justification by faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God.*

This parent truth *necessarily* involves in it, (according to our apprehension,) the divinity of Christ, the necessity of renewal and sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and whatever is commonly called evangelical in doctrine; while it sprinkles the path of duty with atoning blood, and is the seminal principle of universal holiness. But whatever the precise amount of truth which it may comprehend, it is evidently *the* doctrine by the humble and hearty belief of which a man becomes united to Christ, and

consequently one with his people. Whatever variety of sentiment he may hold on subordinate points, the cordial reception of "redemption through the blood of the cross" unites him to "the Head of the body," and through the Head to the body itself. Whatever the order and discipline of the particular church to which he may belong, his union to Christ, being derived from an independent and superior source, is left untouched, as well as his union to the body of Christ. And that church itself, teaching this faith, and composed of such members, is a true church, and an integral part of the great Christian community.

Thus the basis of the unity of the Church is laid in the unity of the faith. By giving us "one Lord" to provide for us a "common salvation," the "one God and Father of all" has wisely ordered that all the saved shall be generalised and united in "one faith" concerning him, by the "one baptism" of the "one Spirit" who actuates and lives in them as "one body."

2. But this is a faith which does not, and which cannot exist alone—*it works by love.* By giving us a new centre, it brings us into a new circle: by allying us to Christ, it detaches us from the world, and introduces us into the society of those who have experienced a similar transition. In each of these we recognise a brother; and feel, by sympathy, that our principles and interests are common to all. And the more clear, comprehensive, and vigorous our faith in Christ, the stronger will be our affinity and love to the brethren. The apostle therefore prayed for the Colossians, "that their

hearts might be comforted, being compacted together (συμβιβασθεντες) in love, *and unto** all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." He knew that the bare *understanding* of the truth—the first rudiment of piety—would be a basis of union among them; but he knew also that the *assurance of understanding* would draw their union closer still; and the *full assurance* still nearer; and the *riches, all the riches of that full assurance* would make the cohesion complete; and hence he desired to see their faith in Christ attain perfection, in order that their mutual affection might blend them into one. The tendency of gravitation is to bring all portions of matter together, and the nearer they approach a common centre the greater that tendency becomes; in the Christian Church, the cross is that centre, so that its members could not cleave to *it*, without finding that their hearts had united and become one.

But there is a reason for this love which lies deeper still—the all-pervading presence and influence of that "one Spirit" to whose regenerating operation it is owing that there is any Church in existence, or any faith and love to cement its members together.† The several

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* και ως, *even by*. See Macknight *in loco*. See also Acts vii. 35, compared with Gal. iii. 19.

† Membra vero Christi, &c. "The members of Christ are joined together by a uniting charity, and by the same cleave close to their head which is Christ."—*Aug. de Unit.* cap. 2. "For the communion of the Spirit is wont to knit and unite men's minds."—*Bas. Ep.* 182.

parts of the human body are united and employed by the pervading soul as one organic whole; and in a similar way, the Holy Spirit—the soul of the Church—by pervading and actuating each of its members, becomes the uniting and sympathetic principle of the whole: "for by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body." Of the entire Church from the first member to the last, "there is one body, and one Spirit." The Spirit that lived in David, lived in Paul, is now living in the Christian reader of these pages, to whatever denomination of the faithful he may belong, and will equally live and act in the last believer that shall cross the threshold of the Church; thus descending and flowing, age after age, in unbroken continuity throughout the whole Christian body. And hence it is given in charge to the faithful of each successive generation, that they "keep the unity of the Spirit" unsevered and entire—that there be no breach in its continuous diffusion throughout the entire Church.

Most beautifully is this spirit-derived union of love adverted to by St. Paul in his first epistle to the Thessalonians: "As touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write unto you; *for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.*" Their brotherly love was a divine instinct—an essential property of their new nature—implanted, independent of any formal instruction on the subject, by the agency of the Holy Spirit—and, as such, common to all who enjoy his influence. "For the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace;" in which enumeration the apostle assigns the first place to love,

to denote not merely its primary importance, but also the certainty of its production. For as love was the first fruit blighted by sin in Eden, it is the first which is reproduced by the Spirit in that garden of the Lord which is now committed to his divine cultivation.

In harmony with these representations of Scripture, the *love of the brethren* is declared to be the peculiar sign given by God to their own individual consciousness by the possession of which they might *know that they have passed from death unto life.* And "*by this,*" said Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples if ye have love one to another"—intimating that while other signs might identify them as belonging to a party, this alone would mark them out as belonging to him, and would soon come to be recognised as a leading feature in the great Christian family. The "new command" of our Lord, therefore, that we "love one another," is not to be regarded as a mere act of authority. Love cannot be arbitrarily commanded. It is the spontaneous complacency of the soul in those in whom it perceives a congeniality of spiritual taste, a community of holy interests, a reflection of the paternal image. Now as these incitements to holy love would always exist among his followers, our Lord knew that in enjoining the duty of mutual affection, he was only speaking to natures divinely preconfigured to it, interpreting and encouraging feelings of which they were already conscious, and giving to that which they felt as a sanctified impulse, the sanction and stimulus of a Divine obligation. He was directing them,

not merely to *allow* the exercise of mutual love, but encouraging them to cherish and cultivate it; to give a loose to the ardor of their brotherly affection by taking his love to them as the pattern of their love to each other; and thus not merely gratifying their own new nature, but delighting him their Lord and Saviour. Besides which, the injunction was obviously intended to convey the idea that obedience to this new command would involve obedience to every other requirement; for "love is the fulfilling of the law." This is a sentiment emphatically repeated in no less than six of the epistles;* reminding us that as love alone—the love of God—has been sufficient to save a world, so love—the love of the brethren—would, if allowed to operate unchecked, be equal to all the duties they owe to each other, and would fill and expand the Church with that element of peace and joy in which the Spirit delights to dwell.

III. Faith and love, then, in the sense explained, as necessarily including universal holiness, constitute the twofold bond of the unity of the Christian Church. And that they form the only bond essential to that unity is evident from the following considerations:—

1. They are evidently the only bond which existed, or which could have existed, among the Christians of the first churches. In the order of nature the object precedes the act—the truth to be believed precedes the act of believing it.

* 1 Cor. xiii.; Rom. xiii. 8—10; Gal. v. 14; 1 Tim. i. 5; James ii. 8—11; John iv. 7—14.

But it was by simply believing the Gospel—the doctrine of redemption through the atoning sacrifice of Christ—that the first Christians became eligible to form a church:—the object of their faith preceded their existence as a church, and was the condition and reason of their organisation; while the mode of conducting their worship, the form of church government, and every opinion independent of and subordinate to that great doctrine were, in the order of nature, subjects for subsequent consideration. As far indeed as these were prescribed by apostolic authority, they were to be received as imperative, because divinely inspired. But their very prescription supposed a church already in existence; or, at least, the existence of Christian men eligible to become a church. Now that which was sufficient to render *them* eligible for membership, and to bind *them* together as a church, must be still adequate for the same purposes.

2. Accordingly, when the apostles were expressly describing the principles which unite us to Christ and to each other—*faith and love* form the inspired summary of the whole. "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; *but faith which worketh by love.*"* "Now the end of the commandment is *charity* out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of *faith* unfeigned."† "And this is his commandment, That we should *believe* on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and *love* one another, as he gave us commandment."‡

* Gal. v. 6. † 1 Tim. i. 5. ‡ 1 John iii. 23.

3. And as faith and love are the only requisites for communion with a Christian church, so are they the only elements of its prosperity. "After I heard," says St. Paul, "of your *faith* in Christ, and *love* to all the saints, I cease not to give thanks for you."* "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your *faith* groweth exceedingly, and the *charity* of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth."† The growth of their faith and love was not merely the sign of prosperity, it was prosperity itself.

4. But if ever the apostles had deemed faith and love insufficient, and had proceeded to add some other bond, it would surely have been when they feared these ties were in danger of being burst asunder by the member of the particular church to which, at any time, they were writing. And yet, when addressing the Philippians on the perpetuation of their union and prosperity, this is the only direction of the apostle, "Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel,"—adhere to the faith in unanimity and love. And when agonising (ηλικον αγωνα) in soul for the peace and welfare of the churches at Colosse and Laodicea, his only solicitude was, that their hearts might be "knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of God, and of the Father, and of Christ." Faith and love‡

* Eph. i. 15, 16. † 2 Thess. i. 3.

‡ Did not the apostles insist quite as strongly upon *obedience?* Ed.

form the apostolic terms of communion with the Christian Church, the means and substance of its prosperity, and the grand catholicon for all its maladies.

5. To constitute faith and love the principles of unity in the Christian Church is only in consonance with the Divine requirements of the moral law;—for what is it but to exhibit religion anew under its twofold aspect of love to God and love to man? What is it but to bring the two tables of the law from the Jewish temple into the Christian Church, that they may lean against the cross, and be sprinkled with its blood? For it is only by believing in Christ that the soul is restored to the capacity of loving sincerely either God or man.

6. In times of persecution, faith and love were the only bonds of unity which Christians in many instances *could* retain. As the "woman fled into the wilderness," whatever of earthly ornament or human appendage had formed a part of her attire, was cast away, and she appeared only in her celestial dress, "clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and upon her head a crown of twelve stars." In the fastnesses of Caledonia, Wales, and Piedmont, Christianity found a retreat from her pursuers; and as she sat, with the Bible on her knees, and her children at her feet, showed, for ages, how well the Church can subsist in the only unity which the Gospel recognises, by simply "speaking, *αληθευοντες*, *maintaining*, or *professing* the truth [of the Gospel] in love."

7. And as any additions to faith and love have at times been found impracticable, so are

they always unnecessary. What can bring the sinner to the foot of the cross till faith effects it? and when faith has led him there, and induced him to clasp it, what additional power can be necessary to detain him? And when love, as the natural result of faith, and in obedience to Christ, has united him to the brotherhood, how supererogatory to add any thing to a principle which of itself "beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things." To think of bringing any thing merely human to the aid of a principle so self-sufficient, and of making such supplement indispensable, seems to be as inconsistent with reason and Scripture, as it would be to think of supplying its entire absence by the same impotent means.

IV. Having thus illustrated the scriptural nature of the unity of the Church, we find ourselves in possession of the following important results. The fact that *faith* is an essential element of Christian union implies that the Church is a *holy* community; the fact that *love* is equally essential necessarily makes it a *visible* union; while from the two causes combined it follows that this holy and visible union is *universal*.

1. The Church is "a congregation of faithful men"—a community of regenerated characters.* The *faith* which draws them to Christ,

* Ecclesiam veram intelligere non audeo, &c. "I dare not understand the true Church to consist but of holy and righteous men." *Aug. de Bapt.* 5. 27. "There are many who communicate in sacraments with the Church, and yet they are not in the Church." *Idem. De Unit. Eccl. c.* 20.

detaches them from sin, and allies them to holiness. This is their only glory in the eyes of Christ, and their chief distinction from the world around. The ungodly world is one vast confederation of evil, and the design of Christ in instituting a Church is, not merely to provide an asylum for all the spiritual excellence of earth, but chiefly to create in the midst of this awful confederation, a counteracting agency of good. The indiscriminate admission into his Church, therefore, of the godly and the ungodly would be an obvious frustration of his design. And hence the numerous and various precautions which he has taken to maintain for his Church a spiritual character; proclaiming when he was about to form it, "*Repent ye*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand;" inscribing this memorable sentence over the entrance of his Church, "Except a man be born again, he cannot enter:" prescribing for it a code of discipline,* which, if faithfully administered, would have the effect of rebuking every sin the moment it appeared, and of casting from its bosom every hypocrite and ungodly intruder, the moment his character became known:† calling its members by names and titles which none but converted men can own:‡ assigning them duties which none but spiritual men can perform:§ and conferring on them privileges which such men only can relish or desire.

* Matt. xviii. 15—20.
† 1 Cor. v. 11—13.; Rev. ii. iii.
‡ Rom. i. 7; 1 Cor. i. 2; Eph. i. 1; Col. i. 2; iii. 13.
§ Matt. v. 16; Luke vi. 27, 28; 1 Thess. v. 16, 17, 18.

Accordingly, the members of the first church were those "*that believed;*" and those who were subsequently added to them were τους σωζομενους, "*those that were saved.*" While the exhortations of the apostles to the churches they addressed, and especially the tenor of our Lord's messages to the seven Asiatic churches, evince the Divine solicitude that such only should be admitted and retained within its pale, in order that the spiritual and distinctive character of his Church might be maintained.

2. By rendering the Church a union of *affection*, the institution is made *visible*. Love, even of an ordinary kind, soon betrays its existence. The love of the brethren originates in a cause, and leads to results, peculiar to itself. The faith which detaches the heart from the world, does not destroy the social principle, but only leads it to seek gratification in another direction. The institution of the Christian Church is intended to meet this want—to furnish the social principle with a sphere in which it might enjoy ample scope and activity for the production and reciprocation of good. Here, we are to look on the faults of others only to pity and pray for them;* and to contemplate their excellences only to admire and imitate: to lessen their cares by sympathy, and to multiply their pleasures by participation; to find and fabricate our happiness in promoting the happi-

* Hence Origen, in his panegyric on the church at Athens, declares, "every division, every schism was detestable to you; you wept over the failings of your neighbors; you thought their defects your own, and were impatient after every good work."

ness of others, and "so fulfil the law of Christ." Here, whatever relates to the advancement of the kingdom of Christ is to unite all hearts, and to be embarked in as a common interest, in the success of which every one is equally concerned. And by this congeniality of character, and identity of interests, the Church is to exhibit the spectacle of a vast community actuated "with one heart and one soul." "*By this*," said Christ, "shall all men know that ye are my disciples;" and *by this* the world did distinguish them. So intense, self-denying, and active was their love, that it stood forth in contrast with the selfishness of the world, like the verdure of paradise set in the desert. *Tertullian*, in his Apology, gives us the very words in which numbers admired their conduct, "See," said they, "how they love one another, and are ready to lay down their lives for each other."*

3. And from the combined influence of this faith and love, it follows that this holy and visible union was *universal*. As it did not originate in a cause peculiar to any particular portion of the Christian Church, but in one common to the whole, it necessarily embraced the entire body. "We know," says the apostle John, "that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren,"—we love them *as brethren*, on account of their spiritual relationship to Christ, their attachment to him, and the traces they exhibit of his Divine image; and, therefore, wherever we behold a genuine Chris-

* Vide, inquiunt, ut se diligunt; et pro alterutro mori parati sunt.

tian, we recognise a brother—a member of the family of Christ. And hence they exhibited a union not merely of individual Christians, but of churches. Having professed by baptism their *faith* in Christ, they were cordially received to the communion of the Lord's-supper; and having joined in that feast of Christian fellowship with one church, they were deemed eligible to communion with every other church.* Tokens of Christian salutation, and offices of brotherly love, were familiarly interchanged.† They were ready to unite in the Church on earth with all with whom they hoped to meet and mingle in the worship of the Church in heaven. Minor differences they do not appear to have thought of; but in the exercise of that comprehensive regard which taught them to "love the brotherhood," they included in their large and complacent embrace "all who in every place called upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both theirs and ours." If ever the prayer of Christ, "that they all might be one," was answered, it was then; when, what-

* And hence Chrysostom complains of Epiphanius, that when he came to Constantinople) "he came not into the congregation *according to custom and the ancient manner;* he joined not with us, nor communicated with us in the word, and prayer, and the holy communion."—*Chrys. ad Innoc. P. Ep.* 122.

† "Both common charity and reason require, most dear brethren, that we conceal nothing from your knowledge of those things which are done among us, that so there may be common advice," &c.—*Cyp,. Ep.* 29. (*Ad Cler. Rom.*)

ever the internal state of particular churches, they exhibited to the world the sublime and glorious spectacle of a universal *agapa*, to which every Christian brother, on presenting the *tessera* of discipleship, received the cordial welcome of a friend of Christ.

CHAPTER III.

SCHISM, THE BREACH OF THE UNION OF THE CHURCH.

As the union of the Christian Church is twofold, consisting of faith in Christ and love to the brethren, it is evident that it must be capable of a twofold rupture. The breach of the former is heresy or apostacy, the violation of the latter is schism. But as apostacy, or a departure from God, necessarily includes schism, or a departure from the brethren; so schism, in its scriptural import, argues an impaired state of faith in Christ, and tends to impair it still farther. Schism, therefore, is to be regarded as the breach of the unity of the Church.

But as this is an inquiry relating entirely to a scriptural question, our first concern should undoubtedly be to ascertain "the mind of the Spirit." Let us then appeal "to the law and to the testimony."

The term "schism," though it occurs but once* in its untranslated form in our English version of the New Testament, occurs in the Greek, either as a noun or a verb, in eighteen

* 1 Cor. xii. 25.

instances. In ten of these it is applied *literally* to denote the violent divulsion of some *material* substance, such as the *rending* of the rocks, or of the vail at the crucifixion of Christ. In five instances the word is applied *figuratively*, to denote states of mind in which difference of opinion was attended with eruptions of temper, and consequent altercation. In only three instances is the term applied *to the Church;* and all of these are in the first Epistle to the Corinthians. Here, then, if any where, we may expect to learn the nature of schism.

The first is as follows:—"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that *there be no divisions* (σχισματα) among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared to me of you, my brethren ..... *that there are contentions among you.* Now this I say, that every one of you saith, I am of Paul, and I of Apollos, and I of Cephas, and I of Christ."* That the unanimity which the apostle enjoins, is not a mere identity of opinion on matters of faith is evident, for to such no allusion is made, nor does it appear that on such any difference of opinion existed.† The Corinthians would have instant-

* 1 Cor. i. 10—13.

† "*Theophylact.*—'Since many may be united in matters of intellect, and yet differ in sentiment; for when we believe the same things, but yet are not knit together in charity, we hold the same notions, but differ in sentiment:—this being the case, the apostle, by adding to the words τω αυτω νοι, the words, τη αυτη

ly inferred, even without any explanation, that the subject on which the apostle would have them to be one, was that on which, at the time, they were many. But by adverting expressly to the nature of their "contentions," he places the question beyond a doubt. Four parties, at least, existed in this Christian church. And having divided, contentions arose respecting the superiority of the leaders whose names they had adopted, and the way in which they endeavored to strengthen their several factions. Adverting to the subject of their disputes again in the third chapter, the apostle speaks of their (διχοστασιαι) factions. What then was the nature of the "schisms" which the apostle here sought to extinguish? *A factious preference of the ministers by whom they had believed, to the loss of that brotherly love which they owed to each other. An exclusive regard for the members of a party, when they ought to have been affectionately embracing the whole Church.* And hence his aim is to remove their party-regards from himself, and Apollos, and Cephas, and to centre them on Christ alone, as the only way of restoring their love to each other. He reminds them in the verse immediately preceding, that they have been "called into the *fellowship* of Jesus Christ our Lord;" he tenderly entreats them all as "brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and pointing them to the cross, touchingly reminds them that Christ alone has poured out for them his blood. Thus

γνωμη, expresses a wish that they might differ neither on points of faith, nor on matters of sentiment.—See also Chrysostom."—Professor Billroth *in loco*.

would he hush their altercations, and heal their divisions, by calling them around the cross, there to feel that they are all one in Christ.

The second passage is as follows:—"Now, in this that I declare unto you, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. For, first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions (σχισματα) among you; and I partly believe it .... When ye come together, therefore, into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's-supper. For in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken. What! have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not."* Three things are here dis-

* 1 Cor. xi. 17—22 "The expression κυριακον δειπνον comprehends here, as Usteri has correctly remarked, the entire observance, as well of the Lord's-supper, properly so called, as of the Agapæ, which were commonly associated with it."—*Billroth.* "το ιδιον δειπνον denotes the supper which each one had brought as his own contribution to the common meal. Προλ., *antecapit*, has reference to the *eagerness* with which each one (of the richer sort, we may presume) snatched up the food he had brought, and filled himself therewith, before the poorer class could well touch it; which would cause *them* (who had brought little or nothing with them) to fare very scantily. And as this (which is to be understood of the *agapa preceding* the Lord's-supper) was not an ordinary *meal*, it was a violation of *propriety* as well as of *Christian charity* so to act; for though each brought his own supper, yet when it had been thrown into the common stock, it ceased to be his own. Thus the plenty of some shamed the wants of others; which occasioned heart-burnings, and so defeated the very end of the solemnity."—*Bloomfield.*

tinctly specified deserving our particular attention :—first, the general charge alleged against the church at Corinth—"I hear there be *schisms* among you; and I partly believe it." Second, the serious mistake in which these schisms had originated, or by which they had been fostered—"When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's-supper"—to partake of *that* is more than simply eating, as you seem to suppose, *in one place*, in mere *local* union. Third, the nature of the schisms which ensued—"for in eating every one taketh before other his own supper: and one is hungry, and another is drunken." As they assembled in one place, and as one church, love would have brought them together united in spirit and purpose; but they came regardless of each other's feelings and circumstances—*and this was schism.* Affection would have taught them to wait the arrival of their fellow-members; but they selfishly began without delay—*and this was schism.* Sympathy would have taught them to unite their means in a common Agapa, or feast of love; but those who had abundance not only indulged to excess, they shamefully forgot their poorer brethren who had nothing, and thus made them feel the smart of their poverty—*and this was schism.* The state of things which is here described, then, is characterised *by the absence of Christian sympathy and love*, and this the apostle condemns as *a state of schism.*

In the third and last passage in which the word schism occurs, the object of the apostle appears to be to sum up and enforce all that he

had previously written on its nature and evils. "God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked; that there should be no *schism* in the body; *but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it.*"* In the beautiful apologue of which this passage is the conclusion, the corporeal system is contemplated as a whole composed of many parts; each of these parts is supposed to be endowed with individual life and separate intelligence; but it is implied that all of them are intended to be united, by a sense of dependence and a sentiment of affection, common to the whole; and it is *the absence of this sympathetic bond* which is represented as the "schism in the body." The application is obvious and inevitable. The Christian Church—composed of many members—is the body of Christ; each of these members, though possessing a distinct and separate consciousness, is vitally related to the whole; and, in order to the completeness and well-being of the whole, it is intended that "the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer all the members suffer with it, or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it." Now, if such be the united action and the reciprocal sympathy of the members of the Christian Church, in the absence of schism—*the*

* 1 Cor xii. 24—26.

want, or the violation, of that mutual care and sympathy is the evil thing which the apostle denominates schism.

In further corroboration of this position, we might advert, were it necessary, to the inimitable eulogy on Christian charity which immediately follows in the thirteenth chapter. Having described the malady with which the Corinthian church was afflicted, he here proceeds to prescribe for it. For a church in the last stages of schism, *love* is the only and infallible remedy. And as the nature of a disease may be inferred from the character of the remedy, schism must be regarded as directly opposed to the love of the brethren.

Having now considered the only places in Scripture in which the term schism is employed in reference to the Church, we find ourselves brought to the following general conclusion—a conclusion replete with interest and important instruction for every Christian and Christian church in Christendom—*that an exclusive, factious, and uncharitable spirit, wherever, and in combination with whatever, it may exist, is essential schism.* The writer is aware, that as the term is ecclesiastically employed in Scripture in reference to the state of things, *in a particular church alone*, it has been contended that it cannot be strictly applied to the act of *separation from* a church, or to the state of things existing between *churches already distinct.*

But, first, as the term is employed in Scripture, in its *literal* signification, to denote not merely a division *in* a thing, but also a total

separation of its parts :* secondly, as separation from a church, when occasioned by schism in it, is but the same principle extended in its application, and producing its appropriate effects: and, thirdly, as even the writers in question consent on this latter account to carry the term from strifes and factions *in* a church to their natural results in actual and visible separation, we feel ourselves warranted in laying it down as an incontrovertible position, that an exclusive, factious, and uncharitable spirit, wherever it exists, is essential schism. Indeed if schism consist, as we have seen, in the violation of that brotherly love which should unite all Christians in one, this is the only conclusion at which we *can* arrive.

Now from this general proposition it follows, first, that the schismatic principle *may exist in only one member* of a Christian church. It is, indeed, commonly found to distinguish a faction; but this is simply because it does not begin to attract notice until it has enlisted a party, and has made itself heard in its party clamors, and felt in its party measures. But how many of the divisions which have rent the Christian Church can be traced up to the unhallowed temper or overbearing conduct of a single member! How probable is it that the

* Thrice in relation to the veil of the temple, Matt. xxvii. 51, "the veil of the temple *was rent in twain*;" εσχισθη εις δυο απο ανωθεν εως κατω. Mark xv. 38. *idem.* Luke xxiii. 45., μεσον, "*in the midst.*" And once in relation to the garment of Jesus, John xix. 24, "they said, Let us not *rend it*," (μη σχισωμεν,) where the rending avoided was a division into four distinct parts.

schisms in the church at Corinth thus originated; for even when the apostle addressed it, his admonition to "mark them that cause offences," indicated that the chief agents of the evil were a few well-known individuals. And how directly should this reflection lead the active and influential Christian to examine whether or not his activity tends to unite or to separate. He may not be one of a party, he may be a party himself.

Second: a church may be professedly and externally united, and yet it may be filled with schism. The Christians at Corinth assembled together in one place—believed substantially the same doctrines—and, to all *outward* appearance, maintained the unity of a church, and yet, at that very time, they were completely pervaded with a spirit of schism. "*Every one* of you saith," writes the apostle, "I am of Paul," &c.; the disease was epidemic; and not one had entirely escaped the infection.

Third: a church may be not only externally one, but really one in doctrine and discipline, and yet be schismatic. The schism in the church at Corinth did not consist in the separation and departure of any of its members to form a distinct society; for the very time when their schisms were most apparent was when they had "come together into one place to eat the Lord's-supper." Nor did their schisms consist in offering resistance to any of the officers or authorities divinely appointed in the church; on the contrary, they were disposed rather to multiply authorities in the persons of

Paul, Apollos, and Cephas; and to be proud of their various endowments, and of the distinct offices to which they pointed. Nor did their schisms consist in any departures from the faith, or in any changes of the constitution of the Christian Church; for however erroneous the view they entertained of what was necessary to the right celebration of the Lord's-supper, it was not that erroneous view itself which the apostle denominated schism, but its practical results. The sin consisted in those unchristian tempers, acrimonious disputes, and factious combinations, which disturbed the peace, and destroyed the sympathetic unity of the Church.

Fourth: schism may exist in the same church, or among the same Christians, in very different degrees. This is especially the case when a rupture *in* a church is made visible and permanent by actual departure and separate communion from it. "If the Corinthians are charged with schism, on account of that spirit of contention, and that alienation of their affections from each other, which merely *tended* to an open rupture, how much more would they have incurred that censure had they actually proceeded to that extremity? . . . . . Though it may be applied to such a state of contention as consists with the preservation of external union, it is most eminently applicable to a society whose bond of union is dissolved, and where one part rejects the other from its fellowship. If there is any meaning in terms, this is schism in its highest sense."*

* Robert Hall, on *Christian, in opposition to Party Communion.*

Fifth: in the event of a separation, the question as to whether the guilt of schism attaches to the party leaving, or to the party left, is of course to be decided only by the *spirit and conduct* of the respective parties.* The fact of their separation merely determines the relative position in which they are now standing to each other; the guilt of that fact is to be looked for in the unscriptural causes which have produced the division and placed them in that position; and in whichever party we find these causes, there we have detected, and are warranted to charge the sin of schism.

Whence it follows, 1, That where persons have been separated and cut off from a church, the charge of schism may lie, not against the church which has excommunicated them, but against themselves. The church may have cut them off as the only method of saving itself from being overrun and destroyed by the spirit of schism; just as the amputation of a limb may be the only method of preventing the entire dissolution of the natural body. In casting them out of its bosom, the church may be only exercising that power of Christian discipline with which it is intrusted by its Divine Head for the preservation of its purity and peace; and for the actual employment of which, when necessary, he holds it responsible. And when performing their excision, so far from exhibiting

* When an overflowing Christian Society colonises, or erects a second place, by common consent, for the reception and accommodation of its surplus members, this is not *separation*, but diffusion—both are still one in love and in Christ.

a want of charity, it may feel as if it were cutting off a right hand, or plucking out a right eye; and may do it "even weeping."

Or, 2, Where separation from a church has taken place, the charge of schism may lie, not against the persons who secede, but against the church whose communion they have left. That circumstances may arise, not only justifying secession, but making it a sacred duty, is evident from such commands of Scripture as the following:—"If any one teach otherwise . . . . . from such withdraw thyself."* "Withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us."† "Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins."‡ Obedience to the will of Christ, then, may render separation from a church an imperative obligation. For instance, when the church at Pergamos had received the apocalyptic warning to repent on peril of Divine displeasure, had fifty of its members trembled and determined, in the strength of God, to obey—and had they respectfully applied to the great body of that church, representing their strong desire to remain in communion with it, and their consequent anxiety to see it cleansed from "the doctrine of Balaam," and from "the doctrine of the Nicolaitanes," in order that they might be able conscientiously to continue in its bosom—and had the great majority of that church, not

* 1 Tim. vi. 3—5, or "If any man teach heterodoxies, &c.

† 2 Thess. iii. 6. ‡ Rev. xviii. 4.

only refused to listen both to the voice of the Divine warning and of the Christian remonstrance and entreaty, but had it even proceeded to draw up a creed or prescript in which the very doctrines objected to (those of Balaam and Nicolaitanes) were embodied, stamped with assumed infallibility, and made necessary articles of faith—and had the fifty then mournfully and peaceably withdrawn from a church which had first misled and afterwards oppressed them —which of the two parties would have been chargeable with the guilt of schism? To wait for a reply is unnecessary.

Accordingly, in meeting the charge of schism, which the church of Rome brings against that of England, the ablest advocates of the latter occupy precisely this ground. "For when," says the ever-memorable Hales, "either false or uncertain conclusions are obtruded for truth, and acts, either unlawful or ministering just scruple, are required of us to be performed, in these cases, consent were conspiracy, and open contestation is not faction or schism, but due Christian animosity."....."For where cause of schism is necessary, there, not he that separates, but he that is the cause of separation, is the schismatic."* The learned Barrow, in his "Treatise of the Pope's Supremacy," has a chapter† enumerating the reasons which justify separation from the church of Rome. He shows, that to withdraw from communion with churches "in case of their maintaining errors, or of their disorderly behavior, is a practice ap-

* Tract concerning Schism, &c. † Chap. vii.

proved of by Great and General Synods, as also by divers popes;" and quotes with approbation the language of St. Jerome, retorting on John, Bishop of Jerusalem, his ecclesiastical superior, the charge of schism—"Who makes a schism in the church? we, whose whole house in Bethlehem communicate with the church: or thou, who either believest aright, and proudly concealest the truth, or art of a wrong belief, and really makest a breach in the Church? Art thou alone the Church? and is he who offendeth thee excluded from Christ?" "Men would do well to consider," says Bishop Taylor in his Liberty of Prophesying,* "whether or no such proceedings do not derive the guilt of schism upon them who least think it; and whether of the two is the schismatic, he that makes unnecessary and (supposing the state of things) inconvenient impositions, or he that disobeys them because he cannot, without doing violence to his conscience, believe them: he that parts communion because without sin he could not entertain it, or they that have made it necessary for him to separate by requiring such conditions which to man are simply necessary, and to his particular are either sinful or impossible." And, saith Chillingworth, in addressing the Romanists, "The Protestants were not *fugitivi* but *fugati* . . . . . they were, *by you necessitated and constrained* to separate, because you will not suffer them to do well with you, unless they would do ill with you." They cannot communicate with you, "not so

* Section xxii.

much because you *maintain* errors and corruptions, but because you *impose* them, and have so ordered your communion, that either we must communicate with you in these things, or nothing." They could not profess what they believed to be false, nor comply with what they considered superstitious; this would have been a violation of conscience, and treason against its Lord; their withdrawment, therefore, was an act of self-preservation, rendered unavoidable by the highest necessity. Consequently, the blame of separation attached, not to them, but to those whose spirit of imposition had made so painful a measure necessary. This is the great principle on which the conduct of the Reformers in seceding from the Romish church admits of the amplest vindication.

Or, 3, The separatist may not only be free from the charge of schism, but they may have separated chiefly to avoid schism. The great sect of the Donatists maintained that their own church was the only true, uncorrupted, universal church—separated themselves from the communion of all other parts of the Church—required of a candidate, as a necessary condition of communion, that he should renounce communion with all other churches—pronounced the administration of the ordinance of the Lord's-supper, out of their own communion, null and void—and re-baptised those who joined them from other churches, and re-ordained their ministers;—"a condition," says Chillingworth, "both unnecessary and unlawful to be required, and therefore the exacting of it was

directly opposite to the Church's catholicism; in the very same nature with their errors who required circumcision . . . . as necessary to salvation. For whosoever requires harder or heavier conditions of men than God requires of them, he it is that is properly an enemy of the Church's universality, by hindering either men or countries from joining themselves to it. . . . . And seeing the present church of Rome persuades men they were as good . . . . . not to be Christians, as not to be Roman Catholics; believe nothing at all, as not to believe all she imposes on them; be absolutely out of the Church's communion, as be out of her communion, or be in any other: whether she be not guilty of the same crime with the Donatists, and those zealots of the Mosaical law, I leave it to the judgment of those who understand reason." Now, it is easy to conceive of a member or members separating from an exclusive and intolerant community, like that of the Donatists, not only without justly incurring the charge of schism, but expressly to avoid it. "We must be separatists," they might have said, "because we cannot be sectarian. Were we schismatical we would remain Donatists, but as we are catholic we leave them. We love the Church of Christ so much, that we cannot continue in the church of Donatus. We think so much of union, that we are content to sacrifice uniformity in subordinate matters for the sake of obtaining it." By thus emerging from their sectarian enclosure, would they not have been leaving schism behind them? And by thus

taking the whole Church to their heart, would they not have been setting a noble example of universal love, and hastening the day when, in answer to the prayer of Christ for his followers, they all shall be one?

Or, 4, Although the first separatists from a church may have been schismatical, those who continue the separation may not be so. "They who alter, without necessary cause, the present government of any state, civil or ecclesiastical, do commit a great fault; yet *they* may be innocent who continue this alteration ..... when continuance of time hath once settled it."* *They* may perpetuate it conscientiously and amicably, so as to endear themselves to the community left, and to identify themselves with the universal Church.

Whence it follows, as well as from the general proposition which has led to these inferences, that the removal of denominational distinctions, or the absorption of all sects by one, is by no means necessary to extinguish schism. "We see that in many things, and they of great concernment, men allow to themselves and to each other a liberty of disagreeing, and no hurt neither. And certainly if diversity of opinions were of itself the cause of mischiefs, it would be so ever, that is, regularly and universally, (but that we see it is not:) for there are disputes in Christendom concerning matters of greater concernment than most of those opinions that distinguish sects and make factions; and yet because men are permitted to differ in

* Chillingworth, chap. v. 4.

those great matters, such evils are not consequent to such differences as are to the uncharitable managing of smaller and more inconsiderable questions. . . . . It is not the differing of opinions that is the cause of the present ruptures, but want of charity; it is not the variety of understandings, but the disunion of wills and affections; it is not the several principles, but the several ends, that cause our miseries. Our opinions commence and are upheld according as our turns are served and our interests are preserved, and there is no cure for us but piety and charity."* Let Judah cease to vex Ephraim, and Ephraim cease to envy Judah; they might still exist distinct as tribes, for they would be one as brethren. Calvinist and Arminian, Presbyterian and Methodist, Episcopalian, Baptist, and Independent, are specific names, innocent in themselves; only let love subordinate them to the generic name of Christian, and it will be seen that variety of sect is perfectly compatible with the unity of the Church.†

* Taylor's Liberty of Prophesying.
† This ought not to be taken for granted. Ed.

CHAPTER IV.

CAUSES OF SCHISM; ESPECIALLY THOSE WHICH EXISTED FROM APOSTOLIC TIMES TO THE PERIOD OF THE REFORMATION.

In attempting to investigate the causes of schism, we have to turn to those dark pages of ecclesiastical history from which the sceptic derives his strongest objection to Christianity, and which contain, according to his representations, the substance of its annals. Having gratuitously asserted, and ostentatiously displayed, the mild and tolerant nature of ancient polytheism, he places it in invidious contrast with the contentions and persecutions which from age to age have stained the Christian name; and then proclaims, as by sound of trumpet, the superior spirit of the former, and denounces the latter as a convicted criminal and a curse. Now, as this is the chief, if not the only point of superiority to the Gospel which the advocates of ancient heathenism claim for it—as the impression of its truth, by incessant repetition is so general that even a Bacon* is found unguardedly stating, that "the

* Essay on Unity of Religion.

quarrels and divisions about religion were evils unknown to the heathen"—and as the supposed tendency of the Gospel to produce dissensions has created, perhaps, stronger prejudices against it than all the other cavils of infidelity combined, it seems not only proper but necessary that a chapter which might otherwise tend to nourish this prejudice, should be introduced by a few warning and corrective remarks.

The following series of hints might easily be illustrated from history, and enlarged to any extent.

1. Even allowing that the theory of the tolerant spirit of ancient heathenism had ever been carried into practice, it could not have been accounted a virtue. For if polytheism allowed the unlimited reception of new divinities, the admission of an additional god to the Olympian conclave, was not the tolerance of a new religion, but only a step towards the completion of that which already existed. Nor was there any more ground for praise in such admission, than there is in the church of Rome on the canonisation of a saint, or in the act of an officer who registers a baptism or a birth.

2. But the plausible theory of the tolerant spirit of Paganism is never known to have been realised in practice. The Athenians allowed no alteration whatever in the religion of their ancestors; and the lives of Æschylus, Anaxagoras, Diagoras, Protagoras, Prodicus, Socrates, and Alcibiades, decided that innovation in religion was death. The *holy* or *sacred wars* among the Grecian states; the sanguinary con-

tests between the respective votaries of the different gods of Egypt;* and the cruel extermination of the disciples of every other religion except that of Zoroaster, in Persia, conspire to prove that bigotry is peculiar to no clime, but is indigenous to our nature. As to the vaunted toleration of the Roman government, we learn from Livy† that about 430 years before Christ, orders were given to the Ædiles to see that "none except Roman gods were worshipped, nor in any other than the established forms." Mecænas earnestly exhorted Augustus to "hate and punish" all foreign religions, and to compel all men to conform to the national worship: and Augustus and his successors literally followed his counsel. Tiberius prohibited the Egyptian worship; banished the Jews from Rome; and restrained the worship of the Druids in Gaul. Domitian and Vespasian banished the philosophers from Rome, some of whom were confined in the islands, and others put to death. From all of which it would appear that intolerance was an original law of Rome—that this law was never repealed—and that, from time to time, it was let loose on the professors of other religions with terrible effect. While the history of France during the revolution proclaims, that hot as were the fires of persecution which Polytheism often kindled, Atheism has a furnace capable of being "heated seven

* Juvenal, *Sat.* xv.

† *B.* iv. *c.* 30. See also *b.* xxxix. *c.* xvi. Cicero *de Legibus c.* ii. 8. Valerius Maximus *b.* i. *c.* 3. Dio Cassius, *p.* 490—2.

times hotter"—that intolerance is inherent in our fallen nature.

3. Not only did persecution exist prior to the introduction of Christianity, it employed its utmost power for the extinction of the Gospel. "The dragon stood . . . to devour the child as soon as it was born." The infant Church was cradled in suffering. Its champions were covered with the scars of conflict. Its members dated from their persecutions. All the instruments of suffering were prepared—all the apparatus of torture and death were brought out and arrayed in its path to arrest its progress. Philosophy, descending from that contempt with which she had professed to view the early steps of the Gospel, joined hands with the pagan priesthood, and conferred on the Church the unintentional honor of distinguishing it from all other "superstitions" by the superior activity of its deadly hate. Armed with the sword of the civil power, and marching under its banners, 300 years were spent in laboring to crush the Christian Church. Yet, during all these ages of persecution, it does not appear that the emperors had occasion to enact any new penal laws. So amply was the ancient armoury of the Roman code stored with the weapons of persecution, that they had only to select and wield them at pleasure. Nor should it be forgotten that the bad pre-eminence of raising persecution from a law to a science, was reserved for a pagan. Julian it was who first taught the theory of persecution, and made it a branch of practical philosophy.

4. If Christianity has practised persecution,

she learned the dreadful art from her own personal sufferings at the hands of her pagan tormentors. Long instructed in the maxims of intolerance, and accustomed to the spectacle of persecution, it was hardly possible that Christians should suddenly forget the lessons of their pagan oppressors; or support with perfect equanimity the transition they experienced from being the offscouring of all things to become the lords of the world. But, to the honor of the Christian name be it remembered, that universal toleration was first taught, even at the time of that transition, and taught by one professedly Christian. Constantine, in his Edict of Milan—whatever his motives, and however inconsistent his subsequent conduct—proclaimed universal toleration; protecting all, pagan as well as Christian, worship; "that they who erred might enjoy the blessing of peace and quietness equally with the faithful."*

5. But the greatest waste of human life has been occasioned, not by religion, true or false, but by causes purely political. The wars of political society, says Burke, "have slaughtered upwards of seventy times the number of souls this day on the globe." So that if the quarrels and bloodshed occasioned by a nominal Christianity is to be employed as an argument against the Gospel, the greater evils arising from civil society, supply a still stronger argument for returning to a state of savage nature.†

* Apud. Euseb. de Vita Constant.

† See that admirable piece of irony by Burke, "A Vindication of Natural Society."

6. Many of the contentions, wars, and massacres, professedly religious, have, in their origin, been really and simply political. Thus the Crusades themselves, or, as they were called, to answer a purpose, the HOLY WARS, unquestionably originated not in any reverence for the land they wasted, but in the rapacity and ambition of two of the most turbulent popes who ever filled the pontifical throne. And in the same way, the wars of the League, commonly ascribed to a religious origin, took their rise in the personal resentments and ambitious projects of the leaders of factions, and the princes of the blood. Political causes having drawn the sword, a corrupt religion was only employed to poison its edge, that the wound inflicted might be the more difficult to heal.

7. All those persecutions and wars which have professedly originated in religious motives, have been undertaken in direct opposition to the spirit of the Gospel, and are denounced by it. Popery may have been to blame—human nature may have been to blame (for every man has more or less of the priest in his heart, as far as that term is associated with the idea of bigotry,) but the Gospel never. So far from this, it proclaims "peace on earth and good-will towards men." To every individual who would draw a material sword in its defence, its language is, "Put up thy sword again into its place." And if the sword be not quickly sheathed, it flies from the place as from an uncongenial element: so that in every scene of intolerance, the presence of the Gospel has always been felt like a burden and a restraint;

nor was it till men had succeeded in forgetting or defying it, that persecution felt itself at full liberty to kindle its fires, and indulge its hate. And often, alas, at such times, the Bible itself has been the first martyr cast into the flames.

8. In proportion as the Gospel triumphs, persecutions cease, and a spirit of forbearance and charity succeeds. To take the character of Christianity from its corrupted form in the middle ages, is as inconsistent as to judge of the mountain stream of the Jordan from an analysis of the bituminous waters of the Dead Sea in which they are lost. To judge of them fairly, they should be traced to their fountain, and examined in their purity. If ever benevolence was made visible in human form, it was in the person of the Divine Founder of Christianity. And the character of Christ, is the character of his dispensation. Within the wide limits of his dominions he allows no blood to be seen, but that of his own atoning sacrifice—no sword to be wielded, but that weapon of ethereal temper, the sword of the Spirit, whose strokes alight only on the conscience, and whose edge is anointed with a balm to heal every wound it may inflict. If one of his professed subjects offend, the loyal and obedient are only empowered to rebuke the offender, and to refuse him their society. Accordingly, excommunication was the earliest, and for ages the only weapon the Church employed. "We ought," says Chrysostom,* "to reprove and condemn impieties and heretical *doctrines*, but

* Serm. de Anathemate.

to spare the *men*, and to pray for their salvation." Though burning with zeal against erroneous opinions, the apostolical fathers, like the apostles themselves, neither authorised nor hinted any severity on the *persons* of those opposed to them. And now again, after having been overlaid for ages by the accumulated errors and oppressions of the world, the spirit of the Gospel is rising and shaking the mountain-weight from its breast, and resuming its celestial character. Unlike the Jordan, it is not only pure in its fountain, but is gradually purifying the element of corruption which had neutralised and absorbed it. Like the waters of prophetic vision—its own appropriate type—it is "going down into the desert and into the sea to heal the waters. And it shall come to pass that the waters shall be healed, and every thing shall live whither the river comes." Wherever it appears, the spectre of intolerance shrinks and retires from its presence, while the Divine principle of charity lifts up its head and feels re-assured. The splendid hope which some entertain, that Christianity will ultimately unite the whole Church in every article of faith and practice, in inward sentiment as well as outward form, is only, it is to be feared, a visionary prospect;* though the fact that the Gospel should have awakened such an expectation, proclaims aloud its conciliatory spirit. There is, however, a union which its subjects pray for, and its promises secure, a union of

* Why visionary? May we not as rationally expect uniformity of faith and practice as union of heart? Ed.

affection, which, "linking heart to heart, shall leave the judgment free, and out of the varying tones of many minds shall form one harmonious whole."

Having thus endeavored to arm the general reader against one of the most effective weapons of infidelity, we are prepared to look, without shrinking, at the worst dissensions and evils which have stained the history of the Christian Church; for we feel assured, that if he has not piety to weep over those evils, his common sense will at least distinguish between them and that Gospel which denounces them, and which is their only cure.

Bellarmine enumerates twenty-six various schisms prior to 1450. And "all schisms," says Hale, "have crept into the Church by one of these three ways, either upon matter of fact, or upon matter of opinion, or on point of ambition." As our present inquiry relates, however, not so much to the kinds of schism, as to the sources whence it proceeds, we propose to show that it has originated mostly in the opinionative self-importance of the members of the Church—in the imposing spirit of its ministers—in the corruption of both combined—and in the arrŏgance, intolerance, and ambition which one church has exercised towards another.

To suppose that schism has, in any instance, arisen from a single and unmixed motive, especially where the agents have been many, and their characters various, would argue a very slender acquaintance with the complicated springs of human action. To take it for granted that the motive assigned by the schismatic

party, or its opponents, is the real or the only motive by which it is actuated, would evince a very superficial knowledge of human character. All that we can hope for, in an inquiry like the present, is an approximation to the truth. And, though schism may have sprung from other causes than those we have enumerated, we think it will be found that all the principal dissensions which have rent the Christian Church, have sprung from one or other of the sources we have named.

I. The first cause we have specified, and which originated the first schism in the Church, is a spirit of self-importance in its members. Proud of their gifts, wanton in their freedom, and idolising the talents of their respective ministers, the members of the church at Corinth split into factions, disregarded the claims and feelings of all who did not belong to their particular party, and exhibited all that self-sufficiency, love of disputation, and contumacy, so prominent among the vices of the Greek character. About fifty years after they had received the apostolic rebuke, the same spirit of impatient self-importance led them to the undeserved dismissal of certain of their presbyters, and called forth a friendly remonstrance from Clement, and a deputation from the church at Rome.

Such was the first "root of bitterness" in the Christian vineyard—the origin of dissension in the Church. It appears to have been the excess of a principle wisely implanted in the human breast for the resistance of oppression, the preservation of independence, the pursuit of

truth, and the encouragement of enterprise and improvement. But when let loose in the Church, it degenerates into the true spirit of sectarianism; is vain, opiniative, and impatient of restraint. Perhaps, no wound has ever been inflicted on the peace of the Church, which this spirit has not inflamed, and tended to render incurable. In doctrine, it is speculative, fond of novelty, confident, and prolific of error; hence arose Eutychianism, Photinianism, Sabellianism, and many other ancient errors, which are only so many names of schism. In discipline, it is impatient of government; looks on the milder graces as weaknesses; and is not convinced that it is free unless it is refractory and in a state of active resistance. In a time of ecclesiastical peace, it languishes for change, mistakes restlessness for activity, and is ingenious in discovering grounds for dissatisfaction. When Christians are contending for the faith, it is apt to mistake a love of strife for the love of the truth. When interested in the choice of a minister or bishop, (as in the ancient Church it often was,) it must needs set up its own idol, though peace, and love, and even whole churches, should be the first sacrifices laid on its altar. This is what Cyprian calls *Erigere altare contra altare;* and even describes as the fertile cause of all ecclesiastical disorders. And this is what appears to have originated the "grand schism," which, beginning in the rival elections of Urban VI. and Clement VII., divided the Roman church from 1378 to 1417, and contributed more than any other event to hasten the downfall of Papacy. And in times

of Reformation, this same pragmatic spirit has often quibbled about trifles, or pushed its demands to extremities, which have made the spirit of improvement itself turn away, and converted a change which might have been a blessing into a curse. Thus, in the third century, the maligned Novatians*—the earliest ecclesiastical reformers, and first body of Christians that separated from the general Church—unhappily went the length of refusing to readmit any, however contrite, who had been once separated from the communion of the Church. And, in the same way, the Donatists in the fourth century—the second body separated from the general Church—who equalled their adversaries in soundness of doctrine, and surpassed them, both in strictness of discipline and purity of morals—extravagantly required that every member should be re-baptised, and every minister re-ordained, who came over to them from any other church. By which excesses, reformation became proud intolerance, and separation schism.

II. A second source of disunion in the Church—and the counterpart of the first—is a spirit of imposition in its officers. Truth is one and indivisible; but the introduction of error is an introduction of an element of division. Christian love, the product of that truth, is one; and is meant to place us in harmony with all that receive it; but to make that which is not essential to salvation essential to Chris-

* The Puritans of their day—called Cathari, *pure*.

tian communion is error, and as such is an element of division in the Christian Church.

"Men are so in love with their own fancies and opinions," says Bishop Taylor, "as to think faith and all Christendom are concerned in their support and maintenance; and whoever is not so fond, and does not dandle them like themselves, it grows up to a quarrel, which, because it is in *materiâ theologiæ*, is made a quarrel in religion, and God is entitled to it; and then if you are once thought an enemy to God, it is our duty to persecute you even to death, we do God good service in it; when, if we should examine the matter rightly, the question is either in *materiâ non revelati*, or *minus evidenti*, or *non necessariâ;* either it is not revealed, or not so clearly, but that wise and honest men may be of different minds, or else it is not of the foundation of faith, but a remote superstructure, or else of mere speculation, or, perhaps, when all comes to all, it is a false opinion, or a matter of human interest, that we have so zealously contended for; for to one of these heads most of the disputes of Christendom may be reduced; so that I believe the present fractions (or the most) are from the same cause which St. Paul observed in the Corinthian schism, 'When there are divisions among you, are ye not carnal?' Thence come schisms and parting of communions, and then persecutions, and then wars and rebellion, and then the dissolutions of all friendships and societies. All these mischiefs proceed not from this, that all men are not of one mind, for that is neither necessary nor possible, but that'

every opinion is made an article of faith, every article is a ground of a quarrel, every quarrel makes a faction, every faction is zealous, and all zeal pretends for God, and whatsoever is for God cannot be too much. We by this time are come to that pass, we think we love not God except we hate our brother; and we have not the virtue of religion, unless we persecute all religions but our own: for lukewarmness is so odious to God and man, that we, proceeding furiously upon these mistakes, by supposing we preserve the body, we destroy the soul of religion; or by being zealous for faith, or, which is all one, for that which we mistake for faith, we are cold in charity, and so lose the reward of both." They who secede in consequence of such impositions *may* be wrong; but they who occasion the secession *must* be wrong. The seceders, if wrong, are so only in the *second* place; the *first* error consisted in sowing the seeds of schism. The spirit of which we are now speaking, delighted with the decency of forms, is blind to the indecency of the divisions they create. It originated the second schism of the Church, by enforcing the observance of Easter *on a particular day*. Victor, Bishop of Rome, A. D. 196, arrogantly ordered the Asiatics to conform to the practice of Rome. They temperately, but firmly, resisted the aggression. Irritated at their refusal, he issued an edict of excommunication against all the churches of Asia. This act contained the first germ of papal arrogance; and occasioned a schism between the East and the West which was not healed for one hundred and thirty years.

Indeed, to the activity of this spirit is to be ascribed all those rites and human additions, which went on accumulating age after age, till the Church had become full; till outward religion had become an elaborated ceremonial to which invention itself could add nothing more; and which only waited till the council of Trent should pronounce the whole infallible and unalterable, in order to render the imposition complete. And as every addition had sooner or later occasioned dissension, so this crowning act, intended to secure to the whole fabric eternal repose, greatly hastened its downfall by proclaiming aloud the necessity of a Reformation. "Instead of composing differences in religion," says Bishop Burnet,* "things were so nicely defined that they were made *irreconcilable.* Abuses for which there had been nothing but custom, and that much questioned, were now made warrantable."

The Reformers, accustomed to this spirit of imposition in the Romish Church, brought away so much of it with them, though smarting under its effects, that even to this day the leaven continues to work, in different degrees, in almost every Protestant church. In the Church of England, it retained so many of the vestments, and enforced so many of the ceremonies of the Romish church, that many left her communion. Hence arose the sect of the Puritans, with the lamentable sequel of their sufferings and exile. In 1662, it issued the

* History of the Reformation, Vol. III., Part II., p. 278.

Act of Uniformity, requiring the solemn "assent and consent" of all her ministers to observances to which many of them objected; the consequence was that two thousand of her ablest sons seceded, and Nonconformity ensued. In the several communities into which Nonconformity has since divided, the same spirit is to be found under qualified forms, sowing discord, and creating new divisions. Here, its favorite instrument is a *Test*—an instrument which, by incorporating private opinions and human inventions with the scriptural terms of Christian Communion, prevents many from entering, or occasions them disquiet and induces them to leave after they have entered.

The same spirit which stands at the entrance of St. Peter's, with the creed of Pius IV., "anathematising all things contrary thereto;" and which stands at the gate of St. Paul's, requiring subscription to thirty-nine articles and the adoption of a ritual, as the terms of admission; stands also at the door of many a chapel, requiring the applicant to pronounce the Shibboleth of the party within, before he can be allowed to cross the threshold, or be made free of the sect. It stands at the door of the pulpit, and says to the man whose life has been spent in the "unauthorised" proclamation of Christ crucified," and whose crown in heaven is laden with the gems of ministerial success, "Descend, I know you not—my mark is not upon you—make way for one, who, though a stranger to vital piety, and even denying the doctrines of grace, has yet more than atoned for the defect by the ready reception of my pe-

culiar mark." And taking its stand at the table of the Lord, it guards the feast more jealously from the uncertificated believer, than from the sealed unbeliever. Nay, in some cases, after the "man of God" has been breaking to the multitude the bread of life from the pulpit, this spirit has met him on his way to the table of the Lord, and forbidden his approach. And thus does it make that sacred spot which should be the rallying point of all the faithful, the point of their repulsion and separation. There, where those who had been divided before should become one, it meets those who up to that point had been one, and compels them to separate. At the mouth of that harbor in which the entire Church should ride together at anchor in safety and repose, it has thrown across a bar which none can pass who will not submit to its pilotage and its terms. Happy for the Church—happy for the world, that the power of this spirit terminates on earth: how often else would it have detained the unyielding Christian from his crown, in the chamber of affliction; or have prevented his entrance into heaven, by placing at its portal more than a fictitious saint, and requiring more than the "Peter's pence." But he who has the "keys of hades and of death openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth."

According to Chillingworth,* "this presumptuous imposing of the senses of men upon the words of God . . . . and laying them upon

* Chap. iv. 16.

men's consciences together under an equal penalty; this vain conceit that we can speak of the things of God better than in the words of God; this deifying our own interpretations, and tyrannous enforcing them upon others .... is, and hath been, the only fountain of all the schisms of the Church, and that which makes them immortal; the common incendiary of Christendom, and that which tears into pieces, not the coat, but the bowels and members of Christ: *Ridente Turca nec dolente Judæo.* Take away these walls of separation, and all will quickly be one. Take away this persecuting, cursing, burning, damning of men for not subscribing to the words of men as the words of God; require of Christians only to believe Christ, and to call no man master, but him only; let those leave claiming infallibility that have no title to it, and let them that in their words disclaim it, disclaim it likewise in their actions."

III. The third cause of division in the Church which we named, is its departure from scriptural purity and primitive simplicity—in other words, its general corruption. The very first step which the Church took in departure from its Divine original, contained in it the principle of future discord. Whatever that step may have had to recommend it at the time, however long it may have been in producing its legitimate effects; the seed was sown, and the bitter fruit was certain:—in this respect resembling that fabled tree of which it is related, that whoever reposed in its shade, and inhaled its odour, though they lay down

as friends, awoke to be enemies. Its earliest consequence would naturally be, to prepare the way for a second step, if not even to necessitate it. The effect of these would be to create a distaste for that book which *seemed*, at least, to rebuke the departure. And when once this feeling came to be indulged—when once expediency carried it over the word of God—the path of corruption would be broad and easy. Alas, how early in the history of the Church this dreadful consummation arrived! and with what fearful rapidity the materials of corruption were collected and combined!

But every part of that prodigious organisation of evil involved the elements of repulsion and dissolution. The "Unity of the Church," indeed, was the theme of loud and constant boast. But it was the union of the contents of a boiling cauldron—kept together by iron force—but restless, heaving, and frequently fermenting over into a fire which instantly consumed them; for whoever left the Church, left to his destruction. Even Popes were, at times, denounced as heretics; others were excommunicated as rivals. Anathemas were hurled—churches were cut off—and empires laid under ban. Many of the religious fraternities and institutions which sprang up, originated in a vague sense of the want of the unity and peace proper to a church: but they themselves soon yielded to the surrounding corruption, and indicated by their decline the eventual decay of the whole system. Many left, from time to time, chiefly for the sake of leaving schism behind them; but they were denounced as schis-

matics, and punished accordingly. The Reformation commenced;—but the Council of Trent embodied tenets, which till then had been left comparatively free, into a binding and perpetual creed. Protestantism, therefore, came into existence both by right and by compulsion. Those materials of corruption which had, from the first, been creating and necessitating division, now produced their natural results. The Reformation was, principally, a conflict between the elements of schism and the principles of catholic Christian fellowship; so that when these had disengaged and detached themselves, little more than those remained. The church of Rome ceased to be catholic, and became Roman Catholic—the great schismatic of Christendom, denouncing and consigning to perdition all who do not belong to her communion.

Well had it been for the cause of truth if all who left the Papal church, had left behind them the whole of its corruptions. Some of them escaped, indeed, much less infected than others—but none of them entirely free. And just in proportion as either of the Reformed churches retained the old leaven, in that exact proportion has it occasioned division, and indulged in the exclusive spirit. "Every plant," said Christ—and he spoke prospectively, as well as in reference to existing evils—"every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted shall be rooted up." Whether it relate to laxity of discipline, to the multiplication of offices, to the imposition of rites, the assumption of exclusive powers, or the adoption of unscriptural tests, the time will come when the

worldly exotic will be rooted up and cast away. No plea of expediency, of custom, of antiquity, or of numbers, will save it from extirpation. In the meantime, God will not entirely forsake that portion of his vineyard in which it exists, provided other plants of "his right hand planting" are found there also. "Showers of blessing" shall descend there; and often shall it "smell like a field which the Lord hath blessed; but far more fragrant and fruitful would it be, were it not for those petty and parasitical additions which have gradually shaded and overtopped many of its fairest plants. While man, in the meantime, holding in his hand the word of God, and discovering no warrant for them there, shall often inquire, "How came they to be introduced? and why are they suffered to continue?" and shall either remain to be dissatisfied, or depart to prepare another and a separate enclosure. Thus corruptions multiply divisions; and charity, if it survive, survives only by retiring, and retires only to mourn.

IV. A fourth, and a very fertile source of schism is to be found in that spirit of intolerance, and self-willed ambition, which seeks to subordinate all men and all things to itself. Socrates of Constantinople excuses himself for occasionally introducing *secular* affairs into his *ecclesiastical* history, by pleading that he did so merely to relieve the reader, who would otherwise be bewildered with the quarrels of rival bishops and churches contending for the supremacy. And yet this was as early as the sixth century. The head of the mighty ser-

pent, indeed, was seen projecting from its den as early as the second century, when Victor, Bishop of Rome, arrogated the power of commanding the East; and again in the third, when Stephen excommunicated the churches of Asia and Africa for daring to differ from him on the subject of baptism; but the fangs and the poison were then wanting. As ages elapsed, the huge reptile uncoiled its voluminous folds, emerged farther and farther from its fearful recess, and moved on from object to object, coiling around and drawing all things to itself, till nearly the whole of Europe was either lying complacently in its folds, or imprisoned and crushed in its deadly convolutions, as in the links of fate. But the history of its progress to this fearful result, is the history of the vilest passions, and the most fatal schisms —schisms in which the great sees of Alexandria, Constantinople, Antioch, and especially Rome, stand forth in the attitude of fixed and sworn hostility to each other, and to every rival power.

It is of the essence of intolerance that it cannot hear of the existence of a rival, without taking what it conceives to be the most expeditious method, not of reclaiming, but of punishing and destroying him. Hence it was that as soon as ever the material sword came within its reach in the time of Constantine, it seized and wielded the weapon with deadly effect. Controversies, which would otherwise have cooled and evaporated on paper, were thus raised to an adventitious importance, and bequeathed as legitimate quarrels to posterity.

And sects—the Arian especially—which would otherwise probably have discharged their ardor in words, and then have gradually fallen back into the ranks of the orthodox, were thus engaged to maintain and fortify their hostile position.

The Inquisition is to be regarded as the true personification of intolerance. All the principles and practices of bigotry which for ages had been accumulating and gathering strength, were collected and organised in that terrible engine of persecution. And with what appalling and wide-wasting effect did the Church work it! From the moment it was completed, intolerance gave itself up to the fearful office. "Not merely the results of thought, but thinking itself;" not merely heretical opinions, but new opinions of any kind; became the marks of its hatred, and received its deadly bolts. The only way in which it now evinced attachment to its creed, was by destroying all who questioned it.

It might have been hoped that the reformers who had themselves been scourged by intolerance from the church of Rome, would have jealously guarded against its intrusion into the new churches. But, alas, the demon possessed them. Love was the first sacrifice immolated on the altar of Truth. Luther, Calvin, Cranmer, and Knox, protected their creeds, as far as they had the power, with temporal penalties. And even some of those who were driven by intolerance from England to America, commenced a persecution against the Quakers no less furious than that from which they themselves had fled.

Nor does the cause of intolerance languish yet. Though more than ever disowned and reprobated with the tongue, it enjoys the secret countenance, and the tried and faithful services, of a mixed multitude in all communions. It can boast of animosities as bitter—dominations as lordly—exactions as oppressive—calumnies as unfounded—and contentions as furious as ever. It finds as much difficulty as ever in conceiving of salvation out of its own little enclosure. It still looks on the reformer who only ventures humbly to suggest, and mildly to plead, as a schismatic and a foe. It still clings, if not with greater, at least with equal tenacity to its own little devices and ceremonial additions, as to the great verities and ordinances of heaven; enforcing them all as of equal authority. It is as unable as ever to perceive the preferableness of leaving the conscience free in non-essential things, as the Lord of conscience has done; and of thus forbearing to widen a breach which ought never to have existed. Infallibility it repudiates as a doctrine, yet still gives itself the unwinning airs of that lofty attribute. Penal canons which have long been superannuated, it still retains unrepealed, as the darling memorials of its more palmy days. Not one jot will it abate of its exclusive and *jure-divino* claims, though the great Head of the Church is evidently and impartially employing and prospering every Christian denomination, not according to its supposed apostolic descent, but its apostolic piety and zeal. Angels rejoice over one sinner that repenteth; but, in every religious community, the spirit of intolerance

exults more in a proselyte
than in a convert from
honor of Christ," it still
its own party; by "Christ
of that party; and by "s
subjugation of Christendo
peculiarities of that party.

These are the causes, then, which we regard as having been, in all ages of the Church, most prolific of unchristian divisions. Many of those divisions, indeed, which ecclesiastical writers have consented to call schisms, have originated in other causes, and should have been called by other names. But wherever schism has existed—wherever the law of Christian love has been violated—or the peace of the Church disturbed—or those have been separated who ought to have been united—there, one or other of these causes, combined perhaps with many minor influences, is sure to be found present and active.

Among the many important reflections suggested by this chapter, the following seem almost forced on our attention. 1. That the additions which man has made, from time to time, to the ordinances of God, have been the most fruitful sources of agitation and quarrel. 2. That even these have not led to actual separation, until they have been authoritatively enforced and made indispensable. 3. That neither the one nor the other could have taken place, if the authority of the Bible had been revered and regarded as paramount. 4. That the supreme authority of the Bible waned in the Church just in proportion as unsanctified wealth, and rank,

influence, were allowed to gain the ascendant; till the Church had become a worldly corporation, and the Bible was silenced and virtually expelled. 5. That the admission of irreligious men to place or power in a Christian church, is the admission of so many agents of schism; and hence it is, partly, that, in the consummation of that kingdom which is never to be rent or moved, all such are to be excluded. 6. And, that the Christian love which the Gospel breathes, and which is to be found in the faithful alone, is the only balm to heal the wounds with which the Church is bleeding at the hands of schism.

CHAPTER V.

THE MEANS BY WHICH THE DIVISIONS OF THE CHURCH ARE PERPETUATED.

Owing to the operation of the causes specified in the preceding chapter, the map of Christendom presents to the eye of an observer three grand divisions, each of which is again divided and subdivided into numerous parts. In the first grand division are to be found the churches and sects which date prior to the Reformation. Here are the ancient, isolated, and deeply interesting Syrian churches of Malay-ala—the Waldensian church, in the Protestant valleys of Piedmont—the Greek church, with its cold and childish formalities—the picture-loving and amulet-wearing Russian Church—the fasting and ascetic church of Armenia—the semi-Mohammedan Georgian—the incense-loving Coptic—the corrupt, but independent and papal-hating church of Abyssinia—and, lastly, and chiefly, the baptised paganism of the church of Rome.

The second division contains the churches and sects commencing with the Reformation. These consist of the German Lutheran church

—the distinct churches of Sweden, Denmark, Geneva, the Helvetic reformed churches, and the reformed churches of France, the united Church of England and Ireland, and the Church of Scotland.

And the third, includes those sects and churches which have subsequently arisen out of the Reformation, and which are in existence at the present time. Here—confining our attention to the principal denominations existing in Britain—we behold the Congregational Independents, the Baptists, the Friends or Quakers, the Presbyterian Dissenters, and the Methodists, with more than one respectable and flourishing secession.

Having traced these divisions of the Christian Church to their principal sources in the preceding chapter, we have now to point out the influences which have originated and perpetuated the last class of those divisions; especially as they exist between the Church of England and the various bodies of separatists; and which, are still, in some respects, widening the separation, as well as occasioning among the separatists new divisions.

Did our limits permit, we should, for this purpose, present the reader, first, with an account of those *specific acts* by which new breaches have from time to time been occasioned, or by which existing divisions have been widened: and then, secondly, we should point out those *general causes* which led to those acts, and which are still perpetuating and aggravating their consequences. But as our limits require us to choose between the two, we shall

select the latter; aiming, however, to supply partially, by historical illustration, the want of the former.

The same causes which produce divisions, subsequently operate to prolong them. And hence a spirit of factious self-importance—of arbitrary imposition—of consequent corruption —and of arrogant intolerance and ambition, having originated schisms, are still active in promoting their continuance. But following these waters of strive in their tortuous course through the Church, we find that, like other streams, they branch off in various directions, taking, as they proceed, other forms, and new denominations.

I. The first of these causes in the order of time, if not of rank, is the predominance of secular influence in the internal and spiritual affairs of the Church. This, indeed, was the primary occasion of secession from the English Establishment. Had the Reformation here, as on the Continent, arisen more directly from the bosom of the Church itself—had it been the gradual result of investigation, controversy, ecclesiastical zeal, and popular desire, instead of springing almost suddenly as it did, from royal spleen and caprice, there is reason to conclude that it would have retained fewer traces of the church from which it had come.

"But Henry VIII. took the lead; *power* became revolutionary; and hence it happened, at least in its origin, that, as a redress of ecclesiastical abuses, as an emancipation of the human mind, the reform in England was much less complete than upon the Continent. It was

made, as might naturally be expected, in accordance with the interests of its authors. The king and the episcopacy, which was here continued, divided between themselves the riches and the power of which they despoiled their predecessors, the Popes. The effect of this was soon felt. The Reformation, people cried out, had been closed, while the greater part of the abuses, which had induced them to desire it, were still continued.

"The Reformation appeared under a more popular form; it made the same demands of the bishops that had been made of the Holy See; it accused them of being so many Popes. As often as the general fate of the religious revolution was compromised, whenever a struggle against the ancient church took place, the various portions of the revolution party rallied together, and made common cause against the common enemy; but this danger over, the struggle again broke out among themselves; the popular form again attacked the aristocratic and royal reform, denounced its abuses, complained of its tyranny, called upon it to make good its promises, and not to usurp itself the power which it had just dethroned."*

As it was, indeed, it received a national existence somewhat earlier than it otherwise would; but what it gained in point of time, it lost in purity and in capacity of receiving subsequent improvement. It was modelled too closely after the form of a civil government, not far at that time from despotic, and partook too largely of

* Guizot's History of Civilisation in Europe.

its lordly spirit. Splendor was considered its royal birthright; and hence, many of those appendages which ought to have been cast off, and left at the threshold of the ancient church, were unhappily retained. A large body of the Puritans objected to these; "but, at this moment," writes Bishop Jewel, "the Queen is unable to endure any change whatever in matters of religion." Some of the bishops themselves deprecated them; "but," adds the same authority, "*we* are not consulted."* The royal will was paramount, and would not bend; and a large secession from the Establishment was the result.

Then was opened a fountain of secularity which has ever since been flowing and operating prejudicially to the interests of the English Church and of religion. The Crown retaining the ecclesiastical patronage and power which it then assumed, has continued pouring in a stream of worldliness, in a constant succession of worldly ministers. And the Establishment, unwilling to relinquish the temporal distinction and prerogatives with which it was then invested, has continued to feed the worldliness of some of its members, and to grieve the spirit, and impair the usefulness of others. The consequence of which has been, that those *without* the church have never ceased to object and reproach, and those *within* have never ceased to rejoin. Besides which, the spirit of division is necessarily engendered and kept alive in her own bosom, between the spiritual who love her for her in-

* See his Letters to Peter Martyr and Bullinger.

trinsic excellence, and relative usefulness, and the secular who esteem her principally for her outward attractions and her dowry. In the vocabulary of the latter, "those professed members of the Establishment who affect the title of evangelical .... are schismatics," and their Bible and Missionary Society operations pronounced unauthorised. For as in the individual Christian, sin is the source of internal dissension, "warring against the law of the mind," so in a Christian church, whether established or not, secularity, in the exact proportion in which it obtains, must necessarily operate as a disturbing power.

II. Divisions, already existing, have been greatly exasperated and increased by the adoption of unscriptural tests and terms of communion, for the real or pretended purpose of procuring uniformity. True it is that all churches must have *some* terms of communion; but that any society assuming the name of a church, should establish conditions, distinct from those enjoined by Christ and his apostles, is, one would think, sufficiently presumptuous. That these terms should consist, partly, of things which the imposers themselves acknowledge to be "indifferent and insignificant," seems to add folly to presumption. But that these insignificant things should be enforced, on men who conscientiously object to them, on pain of temporal ruin, seems to be an act conceived in the spirit of pure intolerance. "To multiply articles," says Bishop Taylor, "and to adopt them into the family of the faith, and to require as-

sent to such articles .... equal to that assent we give to matters of faith, is to build a tower upon the top of a bulrush; and the further the effect of such proceedings does extend, the worse they are; the very making such a law is unreasonable; the inflicting spiritual censures upon them that cannot do so much violence to their understanding as to obey, is ineffectual and unjust." "If they be little things only that we add," says the catholic-spirited Howe, "we must know that there is *nihil minimum—nothing little* in religion. What if, little as they are, many think them sinful, and are thereby thrown off from our communion! The less they are, the greater the sin to make them necessary, to hang so great things upon them, break the church's peace and unity by them, and of them to make a new Gospel, new terms of life and death, a new way to heaven .... It is, in effect, to say, If you will not take Christianity with these additions of ours, you shall not be Christians, you shall have no Christian ordinances, no Christian worship: we will, as far as in us is, exclude you heaven itself, and all means of salvation. And upon the same ground on which they may be excluded one communion by such arbitrary measures, they may be excluded another also, and be received nowhere. And if the terms of these communions differ, they all exclude one another; and hence, so many churches, so many Christendoms. If this be sinful, it is a sin of the deepest die. And if the holy Scriptures speak with such severity, as we know they do, of the alter-

ing of *man's* landmarks, what may we think of altering God's!"*

And yet such was the famous Act of Uniformity, by which, in 1662, the English Church lost two thousand ministers, many of whom ranked among the most pious, useful, and exemplary of her clergy; the validity of Presbyterian ordination was renounced; the ministrations of the foreign churches were disowned; the terms of conformity raised higher than before the civil wars; and, contrary to the manner of proceeding in the times of Elizabeth and Cromwell—both of whom reserved for the subsistence of each ejected clergyman a fifth of his benefice—no provision was made for those who should be deprived of their livings;† in consequence of which the demon of schism received an accession of seven-fold activity, and an indefinite grant of life.

But if we suppose the act so sinful, "how far," asks the same impartial Howe, "doth the guilt of it spread. How few among the several sorts and parties of Christians are innocent, if the measures of their several communions were brought under just and severe examination! How few that lay their communions open to visible Christians as such, excluding none of whatsoever denomination; nor receiving any that by Christian rational estimate cannot be judged such!" Yes, how few the churches that have not had the Hydes and the Sheldons of that day among their advisers and their mem-

* Preface to The Carnality of Religious Contention.

† Mosheim, Vol. v., p. 369. *Note.*

bers! How few that have not even now their own little Acts of Uniformity extant and in operation! How large the sect of the intolerant in every church—men to whom history relates all the instances of the wickedness and inutility of persecution in vain—who lay great stress on little things, magnifying trifles into matters of grave importance—who flatter themselves that their creed or test includes all truth and excludes all error—that their little enclosure, with its wicket entrance, contains and monopolises the Saviour of the world—who would make their conscience the universal rule, and look on every conscience that differs from it as culpably ignorant and even punishably perverse—and whose millennium consists of a state of unexceptionable conformity to their creed.

Ever let us remember that the Christian Church, in its scriptural state, contains nothing but pure and catholic principles of all-embracing love.* The exclusive spirit, therefore, is the schismatic spirit; and he who prescribes a term of communion with it of his own devising—however simple in itself, and plausible in its appearance—is putting a price on the bread of life, and throwing a bar across the entrance to a city of refuge; and they who continue that term, share his responsibility, and are chargeable with perpetuating the schism of intolerance.

III. The evil in question is maintained also,

* Is a Church in "its scriptural state," without belief of the truth, and obedience to the laws of Christ? Ed.

according to Lord Bacon,* "by an extreme and unlimited detestation of some heresy or corruption of the Church already acknowledged and convicted. . . . . Men have made it as it were their scale, by which to measure the bounds of the most perfect religion—taking it by the farthest distance from the error last condemned." This strong tendency of a divided Church to seek truth in extremes, he afterwards traces in a manner which serves to illustrate the progress of ecclesiastical divisions generally. This proneness to embrace the opposite of wrong as necessarily right, is seen in the extreme demand which some of the Puritans made for the re-ordination of the clergy from the Papal church; and in the antagonist position maintained by the Church of England, that *they alone* could properly serve at her altars *without* re-ordination. It led some of the Nonconformists to condemn those of their brethren who practised "occasional conformity," or communion with the Church of England; and led some of the members of that church to introduce a bill into the House of Commons *against* "occasional conformity," which utterly incapacitated a man for holding any civil office, unless his communion with the Establishment was constant. Thus, many of the adherents of each side, forgetting the great Christian principles which they held in common, degenerated into a faction, which strictly prohibited its respective members from intercommunion; and which thus changed the catholic "communion of

* Church Controversies.

saints" into the exclusive communion of partisans.

And still this factious spirit may be traced, jealous of any communication between the parties, except an interchange of frowns, and looks of defiance. Each side may be conscious of certain defects in its own system, and may perceive certain excellences in the system of the other; but it fears to confess the former, or to admit and adopt the latter, lest it should look like a concession to the superiority of its opponents. It is an ancient maxim of wisdom, that it is right to learn even from an enemy; accordingly, an army no sooner finds that the foe is employing a new and an effectual weapon, than it immediately copies and adopts the deadly invention; but an ecclesiastical faction, heedless of the maxim, and more saturated with hostility than the ranks of war, would regard the adoption of a useful principle or measure by its supposed opponents, as an adequate reason for never introducing it into its own service. Many a Churchman perceives the benefit which would accrue to public devotion, by combining with the liturgy the advantages of free prayer; and many a Dissenter feels that parts of the liturgy would enhance the advantages of extemporaneous prayer; but the spirit of party forbids the improvement, lest the one should appear to be conceding to the other. Indeed, there is reason to fear, that should either become so far superior to this evil spirit as to adopt the improvement, the other would regard it as an additional argument for remaining *in statu quo.* Thus it is that the advocates of a principle de-

generate into the partisans of a faction; the pretended preference for truth becomes a conflict of prejudices; and men who should be living together at the equator, have removed from each other to the poles.

IV. An obstinate attachment to things as they are, is another cause of perpetuating divisions. The blind zeal of innovation, we admit, is equally to be condemned. But the spirit of which we now speak is, not that which deprecates revolution, but which refuses improvement. Had it existed under the patriarchal dispensation, it would fain have prolonged that imperfect economy to the present day. It forgets that immutability belongs alone to infinite perfection; and that gradual change is a condition essential to adaptation and finite progression. It may flow from three causes. Sometimes, it arises probably from a reluctance to surrender any thing which was once held dear by our ancestors. But, however chivalrous, and, to a certain extent laudable, such a feeling may be, we should bear in mind that, by correcting an abuse, we are not questioning their piety, only admitting that they were not perfect; that the will of God is paramount to every other consideration: and that the best tribute we can pay to departed excellence is to try to improve on it. Sometimes, it may spring from a selfish regard to temporal emolument. The makers of shrines for the goddess Diana could little be expected to allow any change in the form or worship of the image, if the sale or the profits of the shrines were to be thereby diminished. As little can those be expected to listen

to any plan of ecclesiastical improvement whose highest desires are realised in obtaining a worldly competence from their religious office; except, indeed, the plan should secure an increase of property and distinction. To all such, the idea of change is closely associated with the idea of loss, poverty, and ruin. And, in other instances, it doubtless originates in pride. The adoption of a proposed change would imply that we had been wrong; that we were not so wise yesterday as we are to-day—a humiliation which our self-importance cannot brook. A spirit of improvement, by marking the signs of the times, taking counsel of wisdom, and correcting obvious defects, would be eminently a spirit of conciliation. By evincing merely *a willingness* to advance, where improvement was necessary, we should be disarming our bitterest foes, and changing the more estimable of our opponents into friends; we should be rendering that which is good much more efficient; that which is efficient, popular; and that which is popular, permanent. But a spirit of blind and bigoted attachment to things as they are, by virtually claiming infallibility, proclaims our infatuation; renders reconciliation hopeless; and furnishes those who differ from us with a ground of self-justification and triumph.

V. A fruitful source of the schismatic spirit in the present day, is the wide-spread prevalence of ecclesiastical assumption. The writer is aware that a large class of British Christians look on *the political ascendency* of the Episcopal Church through its connexion with the State, as one of the chief causes of schism.

And, no doubt, the exaltation of one part of the Christian community to the necessary depression of the other parts, has inflamed—whether justifiably or not, we stop not here to inquire—the jealousies and animosities of all. But judging from the Christian amity and co-operation which have existed in many places between Episcopalians and Dissenters, notwithstanding the political ascendency in question; and remembering how much closer still the bonds of union might be drawn on the removal of certain canonical restrictions; we are led to conclude that both might enjoy the substantial fruits of Christian union, even during the existence of that ascendency. On the other hand, remembering the exclusive spirit of a certain part of the Christian community in America, where no such political ascendency exists, we are compelled to infer that the separation of Church and State would not necessarily heal existing divisions; but the cause we have just specified—ecclesiastical assumption—might still be nearly as prolific as ever in alienation and strifes.

Though the reader may unhappily have become familiar with the language and tenets of such assumption—so frequently has it of late been employed—though he may be aware that it affirms the Established Church to be the only true and real church, (the church of Rome excepted;) declares the ministry of every other communion to be invalid; its sacraments nugatory; and its members consequently exposed to perdition—he may not be so familiar with the fact that these air-built claims and unchristian

denunciations do not belong to the original constitution of the English Church, but are the subsequent additions of a Protestant Popery. There is not in her Articles, Homilies, or Liturgy, a single sentence that disfranchises other Protestant churches; nor is the validity of her sacraments any where traced up to the Episcopal succession. On the contrary, the twenty-third article was wisely framed so as to acknowledge the orders of Christian ministers of all denominations; for it declares, that "we ought to judge those to be lawfully called and sent into the ministry which are chosen and called to this work by men who have public authority given unto them in the congregation to call and send ministers into the Lord's vineyard." Accordingly, a considerable number of ministers were, in the reigns of Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth, employed in the English Establishment, who had only received Presbyterian ordination in Holland or at Geneva. Knox, the Scots Reformer; Whittingham, Dean of Durham; the learned Wright, of Cambridge; Morrison, a Scots divine; and Travers, chaplain to Secretary Cecil, and lecturer to the Temple, are among the names which first occur to us. "All the churches professing the Gospel," writes Travers to Lord Treasurer Burleigh, "receive likewise to the exercise of the ministry among them, all such as have been lawfully called before in any of the churches of our confession. And in the Church of England ..... *the same hath been always observed unto this day.*"

We know, also, that several of the foreign

Reformers were invited to England by Edward. Peter Martyr had the divinity chair given him at Oxford; Bucer had the same at Cambridge; while Ochinus and Fagius had canonries in English cathedrals. "The Reformers," says Neale, "admitted the ordination of foreign churches by mere presbyters till towards the middle of this reign, (Elizabeth;) when their validity *began to be disputed and denied.* . . . . Thus the Church advanced in her claims, and removed by degrees to a greater distance from the foreign Protestants." And, having reached a spot sufficiently distant to satisfy their arrogance and intolerance, the children of bigotry have busied themselves ever since in building themselves in from the approaches of Christian charity; and, at this moment, the writers of the Oxford Tracts are employed in completing the ramparts, mounting their artillery, and denouncing the whole of Protestant Christendom, with the mimic thunders of the Vatican. "Almost the only Protestant church who have retained the episcopal form, are we,* in this nineteenth century, to exhibit to the world the odious intolerance which would unchurch almost all the churches of Christendom, except that which has long been defaced by inveterate corruptions, and stained with the blood of the saints? Never again, I hope, will any one who calls himself a minister of Christ in the Church of England, so offend against Christ through his people, as to deny his commission to the great and good men

* Fundamental Reform of the Church Establishment, &c. By a Clergyman. P. 44.

who labored with Luther, Zuingle, Calvin, and Knox, to establish the profession of the Gospel in Germany, Switzerland, and Scotland. Never may the faithful ministers of Christ now laboring in the Pays de Vaud, at Geneva, in France, and in Germany, think of us, as disgraced by the bigotry which would deny them to be ministers of Christ. Never may Guassen Adolphe Monod, Merle d'Aubignè, Colany Neè, Tholuck, and the other excellent men who are laboring on the Continent to promote religion, think of us, as extruding them from the visible Church of Christ. By so doing, we in fact excommunicate ourselves, and are found in melancholy isolation from the purest churches of Christ, and in hateful conjunction with that one which the word of God has branded with an irreversible anathema. But if we fraternise with the churches on the Continent, we are equally bound to recognise the churches of America, and the Dissenters of England. Their orders are the same—their discipline little differs. What reason is there for allowing the Presbyterian orders of Geneva, and denying the congregational orders of New England? And if the congregational orders of New England be allowed, why should we disallow those of Bristol, of Birmingham, or of London? When will our sectarian jealousies cease? Surely we cannot any longer deny the orders of foreign churches; and common sense forbids that we allow those orders abroad and disallow them at home. But if we do no longer disallow them, the acknowledgment should be public, and generous, and brotherly. Let not other denomina-

tions see, or fancy, that we now cherish an irreligious sectarianism in ourselves, more exclusive and more proud than that which we condemn in them."

Nor let the Dissenter hastily conclude that he is quite invulnerable to the charge of sectarian assumption. As often as he dogmatises on the minute particulars of the apostolic pattern; denounces as unsound and unsafe whatever is not at the farthest possible remove from certain supposed errors; demands that every church on earth should be moulded according to *his* notions of the primitive model; and, in the pride of his heart, anticipates the universal extension of his favorite government unimproved and entire; he is making an additional remove from the enlarged and enlightened charity of the Gospel, is an active agent of dissension, and is proving himself nearer of kin than he imagines to the intolerants of Oxford and of Rome.

VI. Another very effectual means of perpetuating divisions among Christians consists in the illiberal prejudices instilled by a party education into the minds of youth. The religious department of instruction is occupied, by many a parent and tutor, not so much with the inculcation of the fundamental doctrines and cardinal duties of Christianity, as in teaching their pupils the peculiarities of their own party, and the errors and evils of those from whom they chiefly differ. But even were they sensible of this impropriety, and disposed to avoid it, where is the stream of ecclesiastical history to which they can point the youthful lip, unadul-

terated by the ore and earth of the party-channel through which it flows? and how few the youth who have read treatises of doctrinal theology without imbibing prejudices against a party, owing to the unjust representation they received of its peculiar tenets, or of their supposed practical consequences. Thus character is poisoned in its infancy, by the very means which should have been its aliment and life. The mind becomes a soil prepared for the growth of every root of bitterness; predisposed for whatever is intolerant in spirit, angry in controversy, and slanderous in report. The party whose prejudices he inherits, gains a bigot; every other party, an enemy; and the universal Church of Christ, whose agent and ornament he might have become, is stained with disgrace.

VII. The application to our opponents of reproachful epithets is also to be numbered among the auxiliaries of schism. Terms of this kind have always been acting an important part in the history of mankind. On every subject exciting to the passions, whether good or bad, their influence has always been great; and especially, therefore, on that most momentous and exciting of all subjects—religion. Here, almost every appellation has been either a weapon, a stigma, a pass-word, or a badge. Nearly every leading ecclesiastical term has an eventful history of its own. Epithets which at first were innocent and merely distinctive, like the distinctive rods of the Egyptian diviners, have been changed into serpents by the necromancy of the passions. Terms which, at first, only

served, have at length, like many an obscure individual in eastern lands, come to exercise a despotic sway. And terms which were once *offensively* employed, have at length, like ancient weapons of war, been displaced by others more sure in their aim, and more destructive in their effect; and have even come to be employed as terms of honor and excellence. The *transmigration* of ecclesiastical terms is *no* fable.

The epithets, Puritans, Methodists, Sectarians, Schismatics, Saints, Evangelicals, Voluntaries, Compulsories, have each in turn been pressed and sworn into the service of party. And the worst purposes of party they answer in two ways. They are so easily remembered and expeditiously applied, compared with an argument, that numbers who could neither comprehend nor employ the latter, are retained in the cause of faction by means of the former. And, having *once* employed them, their anger rises, and their contempt of those against whom the epithets are cast increases, in exact proportion to the frequency with which they are repeated. And, besides inflaming the passions of those who employ them, by *excitement*, they wound and irritate those who are their objects, by *insult*. An argument might be answered or evaded; a historical fact might be met by a counter fact; and an assertion be neutralised by denial; and, in either case, the second person feels that he has *done something*, and is satisfied. But a term of reproach is the barbed and poisoned arrow of controversy which remains and rankles; which turns anger into hatred, and an opponent into a foe. True, he may retaliate in

kind; but, in that case, the evil is doubled; "the rent is made worse."

VIII. The very exceptionable manner in which ecclesiastical controversies are conducted in the present day, necessarily tends to inflame division. And here we might advert to the growing frequency with which the pulpit is made the vehicle of inflammatory appeals. That hallowed spot which, like another Calvary, should be sacred to the cross, is lighted up with the strange fires of "the wrath of man." When the minister should pour out nothing but the result of his closet devotions and scriptural meditations, he boils over with the unholy excitement of newspaper and pamphlet appeals. Where the private Christian comes for the pure bread of life, he receives it, if at all, mixed with the gravel and thorns of ecclesiastial debate. And, there, where the perturbed should come to be tranquillised, the peaceful leave in a state of alarming apprehension of some impending calamity.

Another circumstance to be greatly deplored is, that the religious controversy should have fallen so completely into the hands of men whose principal qualification for conducting it lies in their pugnacity; and who have acquired the office chiefly by the reckless extravagance of their statements, and the energy of their abuse. These are the Circumcelliones of the third century, and the Montanarii of the fourteenth—the mercenaries and bludgeon-men of the war, who are comparatively regardless whether party triumphs over principle or the reverse, provided they continue to enjoy their

notoriety and to receive their pay. Bacon remarked concerning the "Church Controversies" of his day, that to search and rip up wounds with a laughing countenance; to intermix Scripture and scurrility in one sentence; the majesty of religion and the contempt and deformity of things ridiculous; is a thing far from the reverence of a devout Christian, and hardly becoming the honest regard of a sober man. There are now lying before the writer numerous extracts from anonymous pamphlets, magazines, essays, tracts, and newspapers, in which all that Bacon deprecated is done, and much more.* Here, on both sides, historical facts are distorted, Scripture is misquoted and misapplied, faults are blackened and magnified into startling crimes, the rules of argumentative justice are grossly violated, obvious mistakes are eagerly seized and aggravated into intentional falsehood, candid admissions are taken advantage of and turned into grave accusations, the sanctity of private friendship is profaned, old and one-sided information is received and employed in preference to that which is more recent and complete, seeming inconsistencies enlarged on as real contradictions, parts of statements quoted as the whole, and citations perverted so as to convey a meaning contrary to the intention of the author, and of truth; and all this is done too in the name of the God of Truth and Love

* It should not be forgotten that the author is an Englishman, and that his expressions take their cast and coloring from the peculiar controversies now raging in his own country between the Establishment and Dissenters. Ed.

—with a plausible affectation of sincere concern for the prosperity of religion! The consequence is, that the calm and Christian reasoner shrinks from the unholy conflict; the voice of the aged counsellor is drowned in the clamors of party; the meek and prayerful retire from the strife of tongues; and the arena is left comparatively to men whose only object is to return blow for blow—men, whose element is a tempest, and their chief distinction that, like a certain bird of prey, they can fly only in a storm. The world meanwhile looks on amused; the partisan heartens and cheers on his champion to the next onset; the unwary Christian spectator himself insensibly encourages and imbibes the factious spirit; and, in some instances, an individual who only meant to step between the hostile ranks as a mediator, has soon sided with a party, and joined in the fray. While many periodical publications, conceived and commenced on Christian principles, have quickly discovered that their own friends mistook their freedom from passion for want of spirit; and, therefore, in order to maintain their ground, they inflame where they ought to have extinguished, and add to the conflagration of a temple already on fire.

IX. And then the conduct of a large proportion of the religious public aggravates this evil considerably, by confining its reading and intercourse exclusively to its own party. If *truth* were preferred to triumph, men would remember that it is not the monopoly of a party; and, on enlarging the sphere of their reading and observation, they would find so much to

question where they had hitherto placed implicit confidence; and so much to approve where they had previously bestowed all their suspicions and censures, that the evil complained of would in a great measure neutralise itself. Instead of this, however, they are content to hear faults imputed to others without any examination, and praise lavished on themselves with little qualification; until, having heard for years of nothing concerning their own party but its excellence, nor of their opponents but their errors and evils, it ceases to be wonderful that they should identify all goodness with the former, and feel as if the greatest virtue next to loving and applauding it, must consist in vilifying and opposing the latter.

CHAPTER VI.

TESTS OF THE SCHISMATICAL SPIRIT IN INDIVIDUALS AND IN CHURCHES.

While the reader has been occupied, in the pages immediately preceding, in tracing the divisions of Christians, and the perpetuation of the evil, to their various causes, his mind, whether consciously or not, has no doubt occasionally applied the description to what he knows of himself, of the church to which he belongs, or of other churches from which he differs—and has drawn its conclusions of guilt or innocence accordingly. But supposing him to be daily impressed with the magnitude of the evil we deplore, he will not be satisfied with so vague and cursory an application of the subject; he will be ready at once to institute "great searchings of heart." Were Christians in general but to become adequately affected with the enormity of the evil, a loud and irresistible cry would be heard in every church, calling, not merely for individual scrutiny, but for the instant, impartial, and prayerful examination of each church in its collective capacity. The announcement would go forth, "Blow ye the trumpet, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assem-

bly," as if the trumpets of Sinai had convoked us together—as if he "who walks in the midst of the churches," had just despatched epistles to the "angels" of our respective communities —we should not merely "suffer," but invite the word of exhortation, and lay ourselves open to its searching influence. As if he himself had come down to conduct the solemn process of investigation, we should humbly invite him to ascend the seat of judgment, and say, "Search us, O God, and see what evil there is in us, and lead us in the way everlasting." And suppose that in compliance with our request he should actually assume the office;—as each church, in succession, came up for inspection; as its history was slowly, patiently, and impartially brought to light; as its state, at present, passed under the eye of flaming fire; and as the heart of each of its members was laid open and bare —what strange and unexpected disclosures would take place! How many of our present subjects of congratulation and joy would prove to be reasons for humiliation and grief! how many who have hitherto enjoyed the title of champions of the truth, would depart, branded as agents of strife and ringleaders of faction! In many instances, the accuser would be seen taking the place of the accused; and the supposed and compassionated victim of schism be denounced as its author. Terms of communion not prescribed in the word of God—tests of discipleship devised by man—symbols of party, and badges of distinction—many of those things which the churches generally make their boast and their glory—would be denounced as the

creatures of faction, and the causes of strife, where, otherwise, charity would have reigned in peace.

1. Such an investigation, however, is reserved for another day. Let us aim impartially to anticipate its awards, by sitting in judgment on ourselves *now*. In order to assist the reader in this important exercise, we would respectfully ask him, first, whether he has ever considered the possibility—we say the bare possibility—of *his* being a schismatic? or whether he is prepared to admit the *possibility* that the church to which he belongs may be in any degree amenable to the charge? We are persuaded that many a Christian knows so little of the scriptural nature of schism, and has heard it charged so exclusively on parties to which he does not belong, that the idea of associating the sin with himself or his church, is almost as startling and difficult to him, as if the sin were theft or even murder. And yet the possibility we have described must be admitted by him, in order that the subject in its present stage may obtain an entrance into his mind. To this end, it will surely be sufficient to remind him that had he been a member of either of the most flourishing of the primitive churches, his *liability* to the evil in question would have been obviously implied in the cautions which the inspired epistles to those churches contain against it. He will find by reference to the brief analysis of those epistles contained in our first section, that the churches of Ephesus, Philippi, and Thessalonica—the prime of the best—were anxiously admonished against all approaches to unchristian

divisions; as if the apostle would thus warn the Christians and churches of all subsequent times that they are not exempt from the same danger. "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches."

2. But if the evil be *possible*, it may also at one time and degree or another have been *actual*. The reader may almost take it for granted that the denomination to which he belongs has not escaped the charge of, at least, tending to schism, by those who differ from it; and unless he knows the character of each, of all, the members who have ever belonged to it, *some* of them *may* have scattered the seeds of division; and, unless he knows every incident of its history, *some* of those incidents *may* have tended to create dissension; and, unless he could say how the constitution of his church would have struck him if he had never heard of it till to day, or if he had been taught from infancy to prefer another constitution, *some* of the feelings which, in that case, the object of his present admiration might have justly excited, *might* have tended to keep him at a distance from it.

3. Has the reader, then, ever examined the constitution, history, and state of the church to which he belongs, by that standard by which all churches, and all their members, will be finally judged—the word of God? Is he satisfied that were all books except this lost from the earth, his church would find its entire constitution sanctioned and supported by the facts and principles recorded there? Does he belong to a class who persuade themselves that

their church is perfect—that Infinite Perfection could not say to it, "I have somewhat against thee?" and if he does not, has he ever searched for the beam or the mote? does he deplore it? and is he ready to assist in casting it out?

4. The schism of the church at Corinth did not respect its conduct towards other churches, but was confined to the members of its own little circle. Has the conduct of the reader ever tended to disturb the peace of the particular assembly with which he worships? If, when an evil report has been propagated concerning any of its members, he has improperly lent himself to promote its circulation, "taking up a reproach against his neighbor"—if, when his personal accommodation has been involved, he has preferred his own ease to the peace of the society at large—if, when called to exercise his influence in any of its arrangements and appointments, he has raised or encouraged a faction, saying, "I am of Paul, or, I am of Apollos"—if, when a question of precedence has arisen, he has shown that he "loveth to have the preeminence," and has angrily contended for it—if, when a real evil has called for excision, he has gone about it roughly and unfeelingly, instead of cutting it off as if it had been his own hand, or plucking it out as if it were his own eye—if, owing to superior endowments, or wealth, or office, he possesses influence, but demeans himself haughtily or arbitrarily, "lording it over God's heritage"—or if, comparatively destitute of influence, he be yet capricious, complaining, heady, and meddling—in either of these cases, his conduct is calculated to re-

produce the scenes which disgraced the church at Corinth; he is chargeable with having indulged a schismatical spirit.

5. Howe, in his sermons on "the Carnality of Religious Contentions," enumerates the following indications of such carnality:—when we make little account of the important things in which we agree, compared with the lesser things about which we differ—when we lay greater stress than is needful on some unscriptural words in delivering scriptural doctrine—when we show too little indulgence to one another's mistakes and misapplication of Scripture terms—when we are over-intent to mould and square the truths of the Gospel by human measures and models—when there is a discernible proneness to oppose the great things of the Gospel to one another, and to exalt and magnify one above or against another—when any contend with unusual zeal for the sacredness or spirituality of a particular opinion, in order that under that pretence, they may indulge their carnal inclination with the greater liberty—when in maintaining a truth in opposition to others, we industriously pervert their meaning, and impute to them things they never say—when such disputes arise at length to wrath and angry strife—when we proceed to judge of the consciences and states of those from whom we differ—when we unduly exalt ourselves and seek to subjugate all to our standard—and when we discover a pleasure in having such disputes continued without any limit or rational design.

6. Though the reader may be guiltless in

each of these respects, he may yet belong to a particular church, or a denomination, which exacts unscriptural conditions from those who seek communion with it;* which excludes some whom Christ has received, and, perhaps, receives others whom Christ has not accepted; which raises the mere lines of ecclesiastical demarcation into lofty ramparts on which to plant the artillery of an interminable conflict, and which thus presents an exclusive and repulsive aspect to every other part of the Christian community,—and, by silently conniving at these evils, he may be implicated in the guilt which they involve.

Whatever the denomination of Christians to which the reader may belong, he can hardly look around without perceiving that there is one class of the Christian public more directly confronting his denomination than any other. Towards any of the others his feelings and conduct may not be unscriptural, but what is his temper towards *that?* Is he cool and distant towards its members? If he had fallen into Christian or friendly conversation with one of them as a stranger, would he become reserved towards him on discovering his denominational badge? Has he ever been conscious of impatience on listening to an account of their prosperity? When repeating a report of their faults or disgraces, has the evil never been magnified in his hands? Does he experience a pleasure in relating their inconsistencies, "rejoicing in

* What are the scriptural conditions of communion? Ed.

iniquity," because it is their iniquity? Would he complacently witness a course of conduct towards *them*, which he would deem improper and intolerant towards any other class? Has he on no occasion worshipped with them; or, if he have, has he resolved that he never will again? Would it be in vain for one of them to apply to him for pecuniary aid, even if the object to be aided bid fair to effect good of the highest kind? Is he pleased at any measure which, by drawing his own party into closer compact, draws it proportionably off from them? Is he most pleased with those champions of his party who assail them with the roughest violence? And is he inclined to depreciate the less violent of his own party as neutral and tame?

7. The reader himself, perhaps, has appeared before the public as the advocate of the denominational system to which he belongs, or of the particular state and relations in which his denomination at present stands. But every Christian is not called to this special task; many have injured the cause they have espoused, by their rashness and incompetence. Was he more anxious to state the truth amiably, or smartly and pungently? Did he think more of what the *truth* required of him, or of what was expected of him by his party? Did he indite as if under their eye, and as if receiving already by anticipation the applause of being their champion? And when that particular exercise ended, what was the new state of his mind towards the party opposed?—one of increased, or of diminished concern for their welfare? Did

it leave him in the attitude of prayer or of pugnacity?—imploring the Spirit to lead them into all truth, or looking angrily around for an antagonist? Did he from the first reflect whether or not he was called in the providence of God to enter on this particular course? whether he could scripturally expect the Divine blessing on the act, and on his mode of pursuing it? whether his leading incitement was personal reputation, a sanguine and irascible temper of mind, or the glory of God? Was he actuated by a profound reverence for the truth? And did he vindicate the lofty claims of the truth only in the spirit of truth; avoiding all that is inaccurate and partial in statement; unfair in argument; unkind in animadversion; contemptuous, and ungenerous in sentiment; flippant, sarcastic, and unjust in expression; and maintaining throughout a spirit of candor and impartiality? Did he evince a due regard to the real extent of the differences in question; not magnifying a microscopic point of outward observance into a size which eclipsed the cross; and which might lead one to infer that the neglecter of that point, and the blasphemer of that cross, were both on a level?

8. There are certain ecclesiastical solvents, or moral tests, which it is hardly possible to apply with any degree of fairness to the subject before us, without detecting the schismatical or party-spirit, in whatever proportions, or with whatever better combinations it may exist. The reader has occasionally heard of the usefulness of the parties who stand more directly opposed to him; usefulness of a kind which is

likely to furnish subjects for joy among the angels of God, and of high praise in eternity; —has he heard of it with grudging, spoken of it with depreciation, or been sullenly silent concerning it both before God and man? We read of Barnabas, that "when he was come, and had seen the grace of God," he, in circumstances far less favorable to gratitude, "was glad." And the only reasons assigned are, that "he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost." While, with a noble superiority to petty jealousies, and a supreme concern for the great cause of the Gospel, St. Paul writes, that though "some preach Christ even of envy and strife.... not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds..... What then?.... Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice." Now, can the reader satisfactorily account for the sullen silence of which we have spoken, as contrasted with this Christian magnanimity, except on the ground of party spirit?

He may have heard also of certain disgraces which those parties may have sustained, in the persons of some of their members, or in the failure of some of their plans; and, in such cases, the Scripture enjoins him to weep with those that weep, and to cast the large mantle of Christian charity over their imperfections. If, however, in opposition to these injunctions, the reader looked, if not exultingly, at least complacently, on their failures and defects—if, so far from spreading the mantle of charity over them at the time, he even now occasionally takes off the veil which the more lenient

hand of time has thrown over them, and calls attention to them afresh—if, while he is blind to all the honors of their 'scutcheon, he is ever mindful of its blots—if he cares much less about the injury which the general cause of religion may sustain by his exhibition of their defects, than for the pleasure he seeks in their humiliation—hesitates little to wound religion, provided he can inflict the stab through their side—can he scripturally account for this conduct except on the principle of a factious spirit?

9. While the reader very properly contends that there are doctrines which constitute the *essence* of Christianity; which characterise it as a *system*, and make it *what it is;* and that all are capable of perceiving these doctrines, and bound to receive them; he has no doubt also heard of those constitutional varieties of individual minds which naturally lead men to view the same object under different aspects—one, giving a preference to this outward modification of religion, and another to that; yet both agreeing in the reception of essential truth. Now, if he often wonders at the obtuseness, and animadverts on the perverseness, of those who thus differ from him in religion, without ever giving them the benefit of those obvious reflections; if he never places himself, by a slight and very common effort of the imagination, in their circumstances, nor asks himself how much like them he should probably have been in their situation; never makes allowances for the educational and other influences through which they have passed; or,

making these reflections, feels no remission of his displeasure towards them, how can he explain this inconsistency except by confessing to a bigoted spirit?

10. The Bible enjoins, and no doubt the judgment of the reader assents to, the duty of prayer for all men. Perhaps he is ready to add that he performs this duty. But if there be a class of Christians for whom he could not easily bring himself to pray *by name;* if he only brings himself to comprehend them in his intercessions at all by concealing them (so to speak) among a multitude of other objects—by allowing them to pass under some term of vague generalisation—surely he does not deceive himself by supposing that he prays for them.

Had the Jewish high-priest erased the name of one of the tribes from his breast-plate, and yet pleaded that he prayed for that tribe when he prayed for all Israel, could the mockery have passed? And if the reader can thus carry a feeling of dislike towards those supposed into the presence of God—to the very throne of grace—if he can only advert to them there as if they were enemies—can pray specifically and cordially for unbelievers, while he is silent concerning *them;* in what way can he account for his conduct except by ascribing it to a sectarian spirit?

11. The cause of God is one, and his Church one. Every believer has his appropriate place in that one Church: and every instance of usefulness takes place in virtue of that one design of mercy. And you, reader, doubtless, profess

to believe, whether formally or not, *in the holy catholic church, and in the communion of saints.* But if, instead of rising to the contemplation of this great whole, your habitual conception of the Church is confined to your own party—if when that is languishing you feel as if the entire kingdom of God were in a crisis, though, perhaps, every other section of the Church is flourishing—if by *laboring in the vineyard*, you mean laboring only in a party corner, and evince dislike at associating with the members of another party, even when the work to be done can be accomplished only by such association—in fine, if your best sympathies circulate only among those of your own denomination, how can you account for it or describe it, but as a sectarian spirit?

If, as the result of these *hints* for self-examination, the reader should begin to suspect that he is personally implicated in the subject, he will further evince his impartiality by considering the evils of schism.

CHAPTER VII.

THE GUILT AND EVILS OF SCHISM.

WERE men to be distributed according to the various opinions which they entertain concerning the moral nature of ecclesiastical divisions, they might be ranked in the following classes:—Those who look on *every separation from themselves* as schism, and who describe it in terms of labored *exaggeration*.—Those who, considering themselves unjustly condemned for separation, have, in the consciousness of their own comparative innocence, come to undervalue the external unity of the Church, and to speak of its divisions in terms of comparative *extenuation*.—Those who, confining their attention to the emulation and increased activity to which, by the overruling providence of God, some of those separations have led, have come to speak of division in terms of *implied approbation*.—And those who, taking their views from the word of God, regard those separations only as schism which violate the great law of Christian love; and those only as schismatics who either give or unnecessarily take occasion of separation; viewing the guilt of such divis-

ions as depending on circumstances so various that God alone can determine its amount. But however different their estimate of schism, they all unite, in certain circumstances, in denouncing it as an evil. Only attempt to fasten the sin on those even who appear to hold it most lightly, and the manner in which they writhe under the charge, betrays how odious it becomes when turned into a personal imputation. In the same way, each party, in a time of angry division, has been eager to fasten the imputation on the other; thus evincing the general sense of its demerit, by the advantage they hoped to gain in casting it at their opponents.

"In dealing about this business among Christians," writes Owen in his treatise on schism, "the advantage hath been extremely hitherto on their part who found it their interest to begin the charge. For whereas themselves perhaps were, and are of all men, most guilty of the crime, yet by their clamorous accusation, putting others on the defence of themselves, they have in a manner clearly escaped from the trial of their own guilt, and cast the issue of the question purely on them whom they have accused. . . . . It is the manner of men of all persuasions who undertake to treat of schism, to make their entrance with invectives against the evils thereof, with aggravations of its heinousness. All men, whether intending the charge of others, or their own acquitment, esteem themselves concerned to do so."

But while schism is thus branded by universal consent, and while parties have been ban-

dying the charge and criminating each other, anxious only on which the *charge* should finally settle, how insensible have they been to the fact that they were meanwhile familiarising themselves, in common, with the sin itself, drinking into its spirit, presenting to the world a spectacle of ridicule and reproach, and frustrating the very ends for which a Church has been instituted, and for which Christianity is continued on earth. "For how many sad centuries of years," writes Howe, "hath Christianity been at an amazing stand! .... Is this the religion which so early, by its own native light and power conquered so many nations, and which we expect to be the religion of the world? .... For thirteen or fourteen hundred years hath the Church been gradually growing a multiform, mangled, shattered, and most deformed thing; broken and parceled into nobody knows how many several sorts of communions. .... Carnality hath become, and long been in it, a governing principle, and hath torn it into God knows how many fragments and parties; each of which will now be the Church, enclose itself within its own peculiar limits, claim and appropriate to itself the rights and privileges which belong to the Christian Church in common, yea, and even Christ himself, as if he were to be so enclosed and confined: and hence it is said, Lo, here is Christ, or there he is, till he is scarce to be found any where; but as, through merciful indulgence, overlooking our sinful follies, he is pleased to afford some tokens of his presence both here and there."

In order that we may see and lament the

wide-wasting evils of schism, we propose to consider the account given of them in the New Testament, together with the fearful effects which it is at this moment producing on Christians individually, on the visible Church, and through these on the world at large.

I. 1. In the closing scenes of the Jewish economy, we see how the jealous spirit of party turns neighboring temples into hostile fortresses, so that Zion and Gerizim stand frowning at each other; and converts their respective worshippers into bitter foes, so that "the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." It resents a slight constructive insult from an opposing party in the Church, more than an avowed assault from the world, and "calls down fire from heaven to avenge it. It recognises no authority in the Church which is not countersigned with its own hand—will not allow a demon to be cast out by one "who follows not with us"—and in "haling to prison" those who venture to differ from it, "verily thinks that it is doing God service."

2. A spirit of contention and division is, in effect a repeal of the whole evangelical law. In six of the epistles it is affirmed, that "love is the fulfilling of the law." The law of love to God and man, which was proclaimed from Sinai, has been republished from Calvary, enforced by more appropriate and powerful motives, and constituted the grand practical characteristic of the Christian economy. But schism is the breach of Christian love, and consequently a violation of the whole Christian law.

3. It appears to have been the first sin which disturbed the peace of the Christian Church, as such. The sin of Ananias and Sapphira had been destructive only to themselves. But it is the terrible distinction of this sin that, besides injuring its originators and immediate instruments, it tends to waste and destroy the community. Such was its tendency in the church at Antioch. Acts xv.

4. It not only disturbed the peace, but threatened the existence of several of the apostolic churches. Hence, the immediate occasion of many of the inspired epistles; and the deep, earnest, and even agonising solicitude which they express for the restoration of unity and peace. If believers constitute a living temple, this is the spirit which "defiles the temple of God;" profaning the sanctity, and dimming the glory of the whole edifice. Well, therefore, may it be added concerning the author of such sacrilege, "him will God destroy."

5. It displaced the great central doctrine of justification by faith, by fixing the attention on points of ceremonial observance. It led numbers to moot "unlearned questions" and gender strifes," in the very presence of the cross; as, in the third and fourth centuries, it induced men curiously to "anatomise the person of Christ," when they should have been prostrate before him in adoration. Hence, the chief object of some of the epistles was to recall the minds of those primarily addressed to that only ground of our acceptance with God—the mediation of Christ. Phil. iii. 1—8.

6. The *scriptural classification of this sin*,

illustrates its vile and aggravated nature, for it stands associated, both in its origin and tendencies, with many of the principal sins. 1 Cor. iii. 3; 2 Cor. xii. 20; Gal. v. 15—21. Here, its origin is imputed to carnality, to the lusts of the flesh, to the predominance of the sinful and worldly over the renewed and spiritual part of our nature; many of the baser passions are found in its company, either as its offspring or congenial associates; and it is represented as degrading its victims, in some respects, below the mere level of humanity, into beasts of prey, who return bite for bite, and are "consumed one of another."

7. It often amounts to *a virtual usurpation of the throne of Christ*, and of his highest prerogative as Lord of conscience. Rom. xiv.; James iv. 11. According to these scriptures, among the highest rights which Christ has acquired by his sacrificial death, are those which relate to the conscience, so that to attempt to impose our appointments on the conscience of another, or to denounce him for not subordinating his conscience to ours, is to ascend the tribunal, displace the Saviour, put on the brightest of his many crowns, and tyrannise where he should reign—an invasion of his throne which he will not fail to resent.

8. That such a spirit must be *incompatible with fellowship with God* is evident, for "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" 1 John ii. 9—11, and chapters iii. iv. It grieves, and repels from it "the Holy Spirit of God," Eph. iv. 30—32; and takes as its ap-

propriate agents and associates, such as "cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine" of the cross. Rom. xvi. 17, 18; 1 Tim. vi. 4, 5; Titus i. 10.

9. It acts hypocritically, imposing an outward rite under a pretence that it is aiming solely at the honor of God and the good of men, declaring that without it "they cannot be saved." Acts xv. 1. But at the same time throws off restraint, and indulges itself in the violated name of Christian liberty, and at the costly price of a wounded conscience in a weaker brother. Rom. xiv. 13, 15, 20, 21.

10. Among the recorded acts of the schismatical spirit are, indecorum in the public worship of God, 1 Cor. xi. 18; the formation of factions among the worshippers, 1 Cor. iii. 4; the reckless profanation of the Lord's supper, 1 Cor. xi. 20—22; and the consequent rending of the body of Christ. Chap. xii. Thus, in the extremity of its rage, it forbears nothing, however sacred, and is awed by nothing, however dreadful. Gratified it will and must be, though Christ should be present, and his table be the scene of profanation. Accompanied by all the malevolent passions—a flock of harpies and vultures—it fiercely descends upon the sacred feast, pollutes and preys on consecrated things, lacerating even "the members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones."

11. Bent on the gratification of its ravenous appetite, it hesitates not to "destroy with its meat one for whom Christ died," Rom. xiv. 15—to devour immortal souls. But well may our surprise at its enormities cease, when we learn,

Rom. xvi. 18—20, that Satan, the author of sin and prime disturber of the universe, is the parent of schism in the Church. Entering the sacred enclosure—the paradise of the new creation—he early sowed the seeds of dissension, and effected "another fall of man." Aware that the conversion of the world is suspended on the unity of the Church, he leaves no means untried, and no agency unemployed, which is likely, by embroiling the Church, to frustrate its design, and to prolong his possession of the world. While, by the same means, the Church has often been rendered an easy conquest to the world: and, short of this, has furnished it with sport, and even awakened emotions mingled with pity and contempt.

But though schism was included in that *mystery of iniquity*, of which the apostles, even in their day, could say, it "doth already work;" it was reserved for subsequent times to behold the great engine of evil in full operation. Some, even then, were "doting about questions"—*sick* with them—exhibiting symptoms of the *wrangling disease*;* but it remained for recent times for a man to write—and to acquire immortality by the sentence—"the itch of disputing has become the disease of the Church."†

II. 1. As to the professor of Christianity, the evil in question operates to his personal injury in various ways. "Upon *the religious*

* Bishop Wilkins's *Sermons*.

† The well known epitaph of Sir H. Wotton in the college at Eton—"Hic jacet primus hujus sententiæ auctor—*Disputandi pruritus fit ecclesiæ scabies.*"

intellect, sectarian feelings and fellowship," says Dr. Mason, "produce an effect analogous to that of the division of labor upon mechanical ingenuity. By concentrating its operations in a few points, or perhaps in a single one, they render it peculiarly acute and discriminating within those limits, at the expense of enfeebling or destroying its general power. Conversations are cherished, books are read, time expended, faculties employed, not for the purpose of acquiring larger views of the Redeemer's truth, grace, kingdom, and glory; but for the purpose of training more accurate disputants upon the heads of sectarian collision. Here men distinguish themselves; here they shine; here they gratify their *vanity*, which they often mistake for *conscience* . . . . . With one the watchword is, *our excellent, our apostolical Church*—with another, *the doctrine of baptism*—with a third, *the solemn league and covenant*—with a fourth, *the divine right of presbytery*—with a fifth, *the unparalleled constitution of Methodism*—with a sixth, *the scriptural Church order of the Independents.*"

2. "Nor does the *practical judgment* suffer less than the religious intellect. This is clearly seen in the estimate which animated sectarians form of character. The good qualities of their own adherent they readily perceive, admire, and extol; his failings they endure with patience; and his faults, which they dare not justify, they can overlook and extenuate. But should he quit *their* connexion, the first are disparaged, the second are no longer tolerable, and the third swell into crimes. On the other

hand, virtues and graces in a different party, they are apt to admit with reluctance, and rarely without qualification . . . . . But lo! all is altered! . . . . . Our breasts fill with the milk of human kindness; and we welcome to our hearts the very man whom a week before we eyed askaunt, and should have thought to have been a spot in our feast of charity. Nay, we often are summarily convinced, that a person of dubious character has been injured and persecuted. Our inquiries are conducted with the nicest delicacy. So gentle our temper! so charitable our construction! so large an allowance for infirmity! so deep our sympathy! Whence the miracle? Has a seraph, with fire from the altar of God, touched these men of unclean lips, and taken away the stains which alarmed our purity? Oh no! they are precisely what they were. Wherefore, then, this change in eyesight, in feelings, in behaviour? Simple inquirer, thou knowest nothing of party magic! They have come, or are coming, or are expected to come, over to us."

3. The necessary effect of the two preceding evils is to *impair our piety.* The appointed channel in which religion flows is, through the understanding, to the heart. And hence it has often occurred that men in finding religion, have found a mind. But while piety, by bringing them into the presence of great and ennobling objects, has enlarged and exalted the little mind, the sectarian spirit, by detaining men chiefly among trifles, tends to dwarf and shrivel the most expansive intellect—to reduce it to the dimensions of the object on which it

settles, *a point*. And thus, it not only contracts the understanding, and prevents the full flow of religious influence to the heart; it actually degrades and devotes the understanding to other and inferior purposes, so that the heart is left in an unwatered, barren, withered state. When the worshipper should be looking gratefully and complacently over the assembled church, he is prying about curiously for the *marked* members of his own sect, and thinks the temple empty because they are so few. And when he should be *within*, lost in the radiance of the Holiest of all, he is to be found *without*, in some dim and distant corner of the building, angrily disputing with a fellow-worshipper about the most approved attitude of devotion.

4. Nor can this injury be inflicted on his piety without proportionally *diminishing his enjoyment*. The blessed God has so laid his vast and gracious plans that he can be enjoyed fully only in communion; and hence the consummation of spiritual happiness is reserved for the complete assembly of heaven. It follows, however, that the nearer the Church approaches at present to that final and full communion, the nearer it will approach to that final and full enjoyment. But to this consummation the spirit of party presents an insuperable obstacle. By dividing the Church into unfriendly sections, it divides its joys and multiplies its sorrows. Instead of rejoicing in the prosperity of the whole Church, its victim can rejoice heartily only in the success of his own party. His God is, properly speaking, not the God of the whole

Church, but only the patron of a party. And when, like the great Intercessor above, he might be enjoying the godlike satisfaction of taking the interests of the whole Church into the presence of God, his breastplate contains the name of only one of the tribes—he is only the advocate of a party.

5. From this it follows that a spirit of division tends to destroy "*a sense of our common interests.*" Although Christ, as "the head of his body the Church," designs the health and growth of the whole, the hand is unnaturally pleased at arresting and appropriating the nourishment which belongs to the foot, and the right side congratulates itself at the paralysis of the left, as promising it a monopoly of the circulating life. *My* church, *your* church, *their* church, are phrases so prevalent, that *His universal Church*, which comprehends them all, is comparatively forgotten.* No united prayers, no joint endeavors are made for a common good. Less pecuniary assistance is rendered, by the wealthy Christian, to religious objects coming from different parties, than as if they all belonged to his own party. And even complacency is felt at accessions to his own sect, though obtained at the expense of all the rest; forgetting that the injury of one member is the injury of the whole body.

6. Losing sight of the common interests of the Christian Church, each party appoints terms of communion with itself which *disparage and*

* What entitles a man to membership in the Church of Christ? Ed.

virtually repeal the bond of scriptural union.† It is not enough that a man exercise "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ"—if he would obtain admission into a party church, he must pronounce the Shibboleth of its members. In addition to being a Christian, he must swear himself sectarian. A series of very slight changes in his creed will drive him in quick succession from communion with many an Independent church to a Methodist—from a Methodist to a Baptist—from a Baptist to the Episcopalian—from the Episcopalian to the Presbyterian, or back again to the Independents. His piety, meantime, stands him in no stead with either. Piety is professedly in nearly equal request with all; but the piety of the Bible—the "fine linen white and clean which is the righteousness of the saints" is as nothing, till it is dyed in the party-color of the sect.

7. Another consequence resulting from the same cause is, that *the brotherly love which ought to subsist between the churches of Christ is made impossible, and a masked affection of charity passes in its stead.* It would be a self-contradiction for children of the same parent to profess that they cherish a very tender affection for each other, and yet refuse to sit at the same table, or to exchange the mutual expressions of fraternal love. And equally absurd and hypocritical is it for the members of different churches to pretend that their attachment to real Christians of whatever name is sincere,

† What is "the bond of scriptural union?" Ed.

and yet withhold from them the obvious and natural evidences of love. They mistake worldly politeness for the sanctified ardor of Christian love. Instead of cordially welcoming them to the table of the Lord,* and to the intimacies of Christian-fellowship, they content themselves with the bare avoidance of rudeness, and say, "Depart in peace." Instead of pouring in oil and wine into their smarting wounds, they consider it praiseworthy forbearance that they do not inflict an additional stab, and "pass by on the other side." How cutting the sarcasm which should now say, "See how these Christians love," when they have only just religion enough to hate; when they call on Christians to come out from their fellow-christians and to come over to themselves, as loudly as they call on the irreligious to come out from the world and be separate; when they rejoice in an instance of proselytism more than in a conversion; when the sect of the schismatical, including members of all churches, is the most active, numerous, and extending sect of the day; and when a scant and gauzy affectation of charity is supposed to be an adequate substitute for the warm and ample robe of Christian love.

8. The sectarian spirit, so far from extinguishing existing differences of religious sentiment, *tends to magnify them, and to create*

* How much would be gained to the cause of Christian union, by welcoming to the table of the Lord such as we believe are not scripturally qualified for the privilege? Ed.

others. It is in the nature of things, that those who differ from each other, and who have proclaimed that difference to the world by taking their stand in separate parties, should be anxious to justify their respective grounds of difference. But by shutting themselves up in separate enclosures, they deprive themselves of the opportunity, and even lose the desire, of mutual explanation; and by shutting others out, they prejudice them against their peculiar sentiments even though founded in truth. "The wall of separation is continually strengthened, each party fortifying it *on his own side.*" Their pride is engaged to maintain their respective opinions; for, having avowed them, their surrender would be deemed a surrender of honor. The Bible itself is made a partisan; ground for new discrepancies are there fancied or descried; and, consequently, additional reasons for receding a step farther off. New subjects of contention arise; new antagonists rush to the conflict; new materials for continuing and extending the war are collected; and each party would fain enforce the law of Solon, compelling every one to range under one or other of the contending banners, till the whole Church should be embroiled.

9. Wherever the spirit of party is seen, we may feel assured that *the spirit of calumny* is not far distant. How rare the Christian magnanimity of largely and liberally praising even the excellences belonging to another party! How few the men of any denomination who might safely be left to state the cause of those who differ from them! or be intrusted with

their rights! How large the sect of slanderers!—of men who listen with an evident satisfaction to a detail of the errors and imperfections of their opponents; who seize their inadvertencies with avidity, and fasten on the blemishes of even a single individual to asperse the character of a whole denomination; who require ten witnesses to a testimony advantageous to their opponents, but who wait not for two when the testimony is adverse; and who violate the ninth commandment with little hesitation, provided the neighbor witnessed against belong to another party. "Credulity," it is said, "is the magnet of lies;"* and such magnets are to be found in every party, attracting and treasuring up the flying slanders reported of other parties, making them the staple of their conversation, and thus constituting themselves the accusers of the brethren.

10. The fear of misrepresentation thus produced, *is highly unfavorable to the removal of denominational evils, and to any ecclesiastical improvements.* Each party is afraid to advert to its own defects, lest they should be magnified and turned by their opponents into a song of triumph; still less can it think of adopting a single excellence, however self-recommending, from their system. The consequence is, that it carries about with it a consciousness of its defects in silence; or, if one of its members courageously points them out with a view to amendment, he is regarded as an enemy in the camp; and others of his party,

* Magnes mendacii credulitas.

perhaps, will not only denounce him for the exposure, but will laud the very evils complained of, and labor to embalm them in eloquence, and to perpetuate them as excellences.

11. The unfriendly divisions which exist among Christians *greatly dishonor Christianity in the eyes of the world.* As long as Christians contended only with real foes without the Church, their ranks were compact, and their number and strength went on increasing. But from the moment they began to contend with fancied foes within, their conquests ceased, and the day of their weakness began. All historians who have adverted to the subject, are unanimous in representing the endless schisms which divided and sub-divided the once flourishing churches of the East, as having prepared the way for Mohammedanism, filled its ranks, and even invited its march over their ruins. Equally certain is it that the contentions of our Reformers retarded the progress, and enfeebled the spirit, of the Reformation; so that some of the advocates returned to the Church of Rome, and others retired and wept in secret. And who does not know that our divisions are the disgrace of Protestantism in the eyes of the Romanist, and tend to rivet the fetters of his superstition? One of his published "reasons why he cannot conform to the Protestant religion" is, because "*it is not one*—the different branches of the pretended reformation are divided from one another in faith and communion."* True it is, indeed, that the Romish

* Reasons, &c., published by Keating and Brown.

church itself is essentially divided on a variety of points both of doctrine and discipline; that its boasted unity is merely artificial and mechanical—the unanimity of the deaf concerning sounds, or of the blind concerning colors. But this does not release the sectarian Protestant from the guilt of perpetuating those divisions by which the unreasoning Papist is flattered into a preference for his own system of errors. Who does not know that numbers have been proselyted to Popery owing to our divisions. "Thousands," says Baxter, "have been drawn to Popery by this argument already, or confirmed in it. And I am persuaded that all the arguments in Bellarmine, and all their other treatises, have not been so effectual to make Papists here, as the multitude of sects among ourselves." And who is not aware that infidelity itself derives its choicest weapons from the divisions existing in the Christian Church? One of the two reasons assigned for the apostacy of Julian is, that when he saw the dissensions of the Christians, and their rancor against each other, he took refuge from their broils in the quiet of Paganism. "Our controversies about religion," says Stillingfleet, "have brought at last even religion itself into a controversy." True it is again, that the plea which infidelity derives from this source, is too evidently sophistical for any but a depraved heart to employ. Still, this does not discharge us from the guilt of furnishing the sceptic with weapons, however impotent, with which he seeks to maintain his position of hostility against God.

And what is the result of these disgraceful and wasting divisions?—that Mohammedanism, Popery, and irreligion still divide the civilised world between them—that reformed Christianity finds, on numbering her followers, that she still stands in a most insignificant minority—and, worse still, that (like the two contending armies which knew nothing of the earthquake that had threatened to ingulf them both during the conflict) they are so engrossed with their internal quarrels, that they are still comparatively insensible to their conseqnent weakness, and to the disgrace they are inflicting on religion in the eyes of the world. Shame, shame on the Church! and alas, for the perishing world!

12. Our divisions are essentially *ruinous to the souls of men.* The ways in which they operate to this dreadful effect are various. One of these may be inferred from the preceding paragraph—*they tend to confirm the irreligious in their impiety.* These men, say they, do not admit the possibility of mistake on any of the points about which they contend. They affirm that every thing is as clear as the light of noon. The probability is, therefore, that they are all fighting in the dark. At all events, we are content to wait till the articles of peace are settled between them; for were we to join either of the parties at present, all the others would pronounce us wrong; and wrong we can only be by remaining as we are. Thus they reason, and—are lost. Our dissensions *prove serious impediments to the sincere inquirer after the truth.* "I have found in my own conversa-

tion," says Howe, "that some even in distress, in agonies, have said, 'Lord, be merciful to us; I know not which way to go; one preaches one thing, another preaches quite the contrary.' I know they mistake. We do generally, in substance, preach the same Gospel. . . . . But in the meantime it is a thing of very ill-consequence to lay stumbling-blocks before the blind; bars and obstructions in the way of the weak and the lame, whereby they may be turned out of the way who should rather be strengthened." Besides which *the sectarian spirit passes with numbers for the religious spirit, and is their substitute for true piety.* "Have you never known such a case, when it might be said—There goes a proud, ambitious man, a false man, a malicious man; but a man of great zeal for his church? This atones for all his crimes; and both quiets his conscience, and salves his credit together. And who can doubt but this man must be very fond of his own opinions, and zealously contend and dispute for them upon any occasion, when they are to do him so great service, and to stand him in so much stead—to supply the room for him of all religion and morality?" Men of this class are the Crusaders of the Church; who mistake the polemics of their party for the doctrines of salvation; who regard a chivalrous contention for a creed, as a good equivalent for believing it; and whose confidence of their spiritual security it would be all but impossible to shake, since they are conscious of a readiness to fight, if necessary, in defence of religion—the religion of their party. "Oh! how

many millions of souls," exclaims Baxter, "are kept in ignorance and ungodliness, and *deluded by faction, as if it were true religion!*" As if the obstacles to the salvation of men were not sufficiently great without, we thus multiply the difficulties of some by our dissensions, and confirm the fatal delusions of others. *We*, who are appointed instrumentally to save them, become the accessaries to, and occasions of, their destruction.

13. But besides the evils we have enumerated, and which have always been flowing from the divided Church, its growing activity of late, as an agent of good to the world, has brought to light other evils of a most alarming character. The wounds which it exhibited in a comparatively quiescent state, become increasingly felt and inflamed by every effort which it makes to move. In consequence of its divisions, *the cause of national education and religious improvement is impeded and impaired.* The people generally ask for knowledge; the government is willing to respond to the request; but the professed friends of education are divided through the fear that each party will pervert and employ it as a *power* for its own purposes. The principle of universal instruction is carried; but who shall settle the practice? The *question of questions* has become a party question; that which might prove a national blessing is perverted into a national curse; and the heritage we are bequeathing to posterity is "a heritage of dissension. The time for conciliation is childhood; but it appears that we prefer to arm posterity for the contest, rather than

to do away with the necessity of contending at all. Surely this has neither the foresight of sound policy, nor the benevolence of philanthropy. The dictates of such would say, 'We are brothers, we are brothers; let us not sow the seeds of internal discord from generation to generation. Let us cease to split straws; at least, let us not use them for fuel to light up the fires of perpetual contention for our children's children.'"*

Obstacles, often insurmountable, present themselves from the same quarter, to the efforts which are made to enlighten and evangelise our adult population. This is especially the case in our smaller towns and rural districts. He who knows any thing of their moral statistics is aware that, in such places, many a circle might be drawn, including from five hundred to five or six thousand souls, comparatively abandoned to the ignorance of baptised heathenism. Here, it might be supposed, a Christian agent would only have to come and labor from one part of the Church, in order to secure the encouraging "God speed" of every other part. Not so, however. Often does it happen that he no sooner attempts to enlighten this darkness than he finds himself resisted—not merely by the demons of ignorance and vice, but by a demon more hazardous to encounter and difficult to allay—the spirit of religious party. He is soon made to feel that he is treading enchanted ground, and has incurred the unappeasable displeasure of its

* Literary Gazette.

guardian spirit. Prejudice misunderstands his object, and construes the impulse of his compassion into a crime; authority frowns on him; and impiety, secretly encouraged, will not unfrequently threaten him with personal violence. If he persevere, it is only by maintaining the spirit of an ancient martyr; but numerons are the instances in which the prospect of encountering so much hostility, effectually deters the philanthropist from making the attempt; or in which, having made it, he retires disheartened and defeated by those at whose hands he was entitled to look for benediction and aid. Meanwhile, the "people are destroyed through lack of knowledge."

14. And—to conclude this long catalogue of evils arising from our divisions—*they enfeeble and endanger our missionary operations, and delay the conversion of the world.* They do this, partly, *by dividing our limited instrumentality.* One church abounds more in the zeal which burns for active exertion, and another in the wisdom which is profitable to direct; in which case co-operation would be strength, but isolation is weakness and folly. One society calls aloud for agents, and pledges itself to raise the funds for their support: while another proclaims that it has agents ready, if it did but possess means for sending them forth. Here, sympathy with each other's wants, by uniting their respective means, would happily supply them both; while a spirit of division is making that which is already little, still less. The combined resources of the whole Church would be only adequate to its work; but, as if

we possessed them in superfluous abundance, we so effectually reduce them by our divisions, that their insignificance tempts opposition, and not unfrequently incurs defeat.

Not only do our dissensions divide and weaken our missionary resources at home, *they also tend to counteract their influence abroad.* It is in vain to say that but little disagreement exists *as yet* among our Christian missionaries abroad; the seeds of discord only ask for time, and they will not fail to bear their proper fruit. It is in vain to say that good is done notwithstanding our disunion; the partial good which is effected abroad, is effected by merging the disputes of home—in fact, by uniting, or by pretending to a degree of fraternity which the relative state of parties at home will not justify. And would not a knowledge of our differences there be fatal to our usefulness? Would it not shake the confidence of the religious noviciate there; and embroil the churches; and cover the breast of the idolater with an additional coat of resistance to the arrows of the Lord; and arm the Brahmin, the sceptic, and every hostile hand, with a new weapon of attack? To expect that a divided Church should be honored by God in the conversion of the world, is to expect that the prayer of Christ will be frustrated in pure indulgence to our perverseness. Having implored the unity of his disciples as essential to the final success of his Gospel, we cannot expect the end independent of the means, without impugning his wisdom, and hoping that his prayer may be forgotten. To indulge in a spirit of dissension is to counter-

act the object of our own intercessions. For, if we pray that the will of God may be done on earth as it is in heaven, we are to remember that it is obeyed there unanimously and harmoniously, as well as universally; so that we are virtually requesting that it may not be done by us, or, at least, in our present divided state, but at some indefinitely distant time, when all the wounds of the Church shall be healed. Besides which, we are to remember, that the unity of the Church is not merely a scripture doctrine, its practical and visible exhibition is evidently intended to be the grand means for the conversion of the world, and a leading design of the Christian dispensation. By our divisions, therefore, we are either intentionally counteracting the plans of God, or else they evince an expectation that, in homage to our importance, he will repeal his own well-ordered designs, put extraordinary honor on those who love their own particular opinions in preference to his commands, and publish himself to the world as the Patron of variance and divisions among his people.

And more than all, our dissensions impede the usefulness of the Church and delay the conversion of the world, *by grieving the Holy Spirit of God.* Were any particular section of the Church to proclaim its independence of Divine influence, it would be denounced as heterodox by the common consent of Christendom. And yet, the necessity of such influence is not insisted on in Scripture more clearly or frequently, than the necessity of Christian union in order to the full impartation of that

influence. So that to expect religious prosperity without the aid of the Spirit, and to expect that aid in a divided Church, are two expectations equally unscriptural and profane. Had the morning of the day of Pentecost found the disciples assembled in strife or split into factions, can we imagine that the Divine Spirit would have filled with his presence a house already filled with another spirit, an antagonist spirit of malevolence?—or that he would have even approached the contentious scene? Something quicker and stronger than reasoning—an instinctive conviction—tells us that he would not. What is the change, then, which we suppose him to have since undergone—or what the peculiar grounds which lead us to expect—that he should mingle with our strifes, and countenance our schisms? He is still the Spirit of peace, and can he approve of our wars? He is still the Spirit of love—and can he dwell amidst elements of anger and hostility? Or, as the Spirit of union—can he consistently put marked honor on the instrumentality of a church, which seems to have prescribed to itself, as the great condition of its moving, that it will move only in parties, and work only in factions? Indeed, it is well worthy the consideration of the Christian Church, whether it is not occupying, at this moment, a position of infatuation and guilt in relation to the promised Spirit, similar to that of the ancient Jewish church in relation to the promised Messiah—whether it is not equally true of each, that "he came to his own, and his own received him not."

Now, if the preceding be a correct represen-

tation of the evils of schism, it would appear that as the design of God is to erect a spiritual temple from the ruins of the fall, so the object of the demon Schism is to mar that work in every step of its progress, and to reduce it again to its original chaos. Taking possession of the individual Christian, it so incorporates with his system, and transforms him into its own nature, that he is no longer himself; his judgments are so impaired that, however rational on other subjects, the Divine image itself, unless seen in one particular light, is shunned as if it resembled the likeness of an enemy; the strongest ties of Christian and natural relationship are burst asunder like the bands of the demoniac among the tombs; communion with his party is mistaken for communion with the Deity; and even the Great God himself is circumscribed within narrow limits, and worshipped only as the God of a faction. Impatient to commence its work of ruin, the spirit of schism waited not for the gradual process of worldliness to sap the piety of the Church, but bursting into the temple while yet the apostles were personally conducting the worship, it broke in pieces the tables of the law of love as impediments to all its subsequent designs, and threw down the cross in favor of an outward and superannuated rite. Calling to its aid "variance, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies," it divided the assembled worshippers into angry factions; gave to each a party standard and an inflammatory watchword; and changed the peaceful Church into a hostile camp. Forcing its way even to the table of

the Lord, it laid unhallowed hands on the sacred feast, turned the cup of blessing into a curse, and planted a symbol of strife in the very place of the cross.* Clothed in the garb of a pretended zeal for the truth, and filling its hands with manacles and chains, it entered the thrice-holy place where God and conscience alone should meet, dared to ascend the throne where God alone should sit, and summoning into its presence all who denied or even doubted its authority, loaded them with fetters in the name of the God of liberty and love. In vain did its victims protest and plead, and appeal in bitterness of soul from earth to Heaven—the Demon heard not their cries, saw not their tears; and if it had, what were weak consciences to it? wounded consciences, or even ruined souls, to it?—a thousand fold more terrible than Moloch or the fabled Minotaur, it found music in groans, and, feasting on blood, ravenously devoured "him with its meat for whom Christ died."

Disdaining the ruin of only a single Christian, or a particular church, its aim is to embroil and destroy the whole Christian community. Times have been when all the armed powers of the earth were fighting in its pay, and all the engines of torture active in its service. Not satisfied with such limited and ordinary aids, it has devised improved methods of inflicting suffering, and furnished the world with hints of cruelty. While its desolating march through Christendom might be easily traced, by the light of the martyr-fires which

its own hands have kindled; by the cries of the sufferers left prostrate in its rear; by the ruins of Christian temples which it rased to the ground, and by the prisons and inquisitions which those ruins enabled it to erect in their stead.

If, in the present day, the spirit of schism is less conversant than formerly with the grosser forms of persecution, it is not owing to any change in its nature; its operations are as active, extensive, and fearful in their effects as ever. Though perpetually convicted of error, it cannot think of speaking in less than a tone of infallibility, or of requiring less than implicit deference to its oracular strains. As if penal measures had invariably succeeded instead of invariably failed, it is as sanguine as ever that they would secure submission to its will. In its service slander prepares the subtlest poison; breathes a suspicion on acts over which all heaven is rejoicing; makes it a virtue to hate men whom it should be a happiness to love; and, by perverse misapplications of Scripture, converts even the sword of the Spirit into an assassin's dagger. As if it were a sworn agent of the powers of darkness, and were actually experimenting on the infinite divisibility of the Church, it continues absorbed in punctilios, and insisting on comparative trifles; heedless, meantime, of the cries of the souls it is ruining, of the laugh of the world it is amusing, of the remonstrances of the Heaven it is offending; regardless, that among the most obvious consequen-

ces of its conduct are, the grieved Spirit of God retiring from it to the greatest possible distance compatible with the continued existence of the Church—the infliction of fresh wounds on the body of Christ—the prolongation of the reign of Antichrist—and the postponement of millennial triumphs.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PLEAS AND DISGUISES OF SCHISM.

THE evils of schism are so obvious and fearful, that we might well believe it impossible for a word to be uttered in palliation, did not facts affirm the contrary; and did we not know that no single evil has ever been obliterated from the long catalogue which sin has produced, through the want of a defence. An evil, indeed, is generally defended, not in its own naked and proper character, but by assuming the mask and name of a virtue; but the pleas and disguises of schism are so transparent and obvious, that we might well wonder how any one could ever be beguiled by them, and still more that he should expect others to allow them to pass for valid reasons.

I. If, for instance, in order to expose the evils of schism, we place them in contrast with the unity of the primitive Church—when *church*-communion was *catholic*-communion—it is sometimes objected, that "circumstances, since then, have materially altered; that many things which were easy at first, are impracticable now; and that, although prior to the

existence of divisions, it might have been the duty of Christians to avoid them, yet to return from them now is impossible." Such are the pleas and excuses of an ignorant and inconsiderate sloth.

According to this representation, the waters of the sanctuary, like another Euphrates, have only to separate, to wear for themselves new channels, or to stagnate into pools, reducing the Church to the desolation of another Babylon, and, from that moment, it ceases to be the duty of Christians to attempt to unite them again—to restore the Church to its primitive prosperity. Sin has only to wait till it can plead antiquity, in order to establish its title to undisturbed dominion. The task of reformation has only to become difficult in order to cease to be obligatory. It is true, there existed in the primitive Church causes of separation much more weighty than many of those which have since led to division, and yet no separation took place; and that example was no doubt meant to be binding on the Church in all subsequent times; but, it was only necessary to depart from it, in order to annul its authority. It is true, also, that the command of Christ requires union; but only as long as such union is perfectly convenient; as soon as ever it becomes difficult to continue, or to restore it, he permits us to be as divided as we please.

The startling inconsistency of this language, and the profanity of the sentiments which it implies, are evident. And yet, unless the objector is prepared to avow them at the tribunal of God, we would adjure him to examine wheth-

er they are not fairly involved in the excuses on which he is disposed to rely.

II. "But the word of God declares that unanimity of sentiment is essential to union; in the absence of such unanimity, therefore, union would be hypocrisy, and divisions are inevitable." This excuse for schism might be entertained if the union which the Scriptures enjoin demanded perfect identity of religious opinion. But that such is not the nature of the unanimity they require, has already been made sufficiently apparent.* The oneness of sentiment which they inculcate, relates only to those articles of faith which are essential to unite us to Christ; if they insist on any agreement beyond this, it is agreement of affection. "Be perfectly joined together," says the apostle,† "in the same mind and in the same *judgment*" —or, as the word is elsewhere translated,‡ *purpose*—a passage which is often quoted to prove that entire identity of religious opinion is essential to Christian-fellowship. A reference to page 94 will show, however, that the unanimity enjoined related not to "opinions," but to "leaders." So that, rightly understood, it implies that, *notwithstanding* their circumstantial differences, the Christians addressed should yet be one in heart.

Apostolical practice illustrated apostolical teaching: that the unanimity, therefore, which the apostles inculcated as necessary to Christian-fellowship is such as we have described, is evident from the fact, that minor differences of

* See chap. ii. † 1 Cor. i. 10. ‡ Acts xx. 3.

opinion were actually permitted by them in the churches which they planted and watched over.* For well they knew that such differences were inevitable to humanity in its present probationary state; that where piety flourishes they will not impede the free circulation of Christian love; and that, even if they did, the way to diminish them is, not to make them grounds of division, but to view them in connexion with those infinite and eternal principles on which we are one.

And history and experience demonstrate that unanimity of affection is perfectly compatible with circumstantial variety of religious opinion. Where is the particular church even, whose members are all absolutely agreed on every theological tittle? yet numerous are the particular churches which are living in internal harmony and love. In many an Episcopalian edifice the Calvinist and the Armenian worship together in peace;† and in many a Dissenting chapel, the Baptist and Pædobaptist commune together at the table of the Lord. The "United Christian churches"‡ established in Scotland, including Calvinists, Baxterians, Presbyterians, Baptists, Independents, and Methodists, are said to exhibit the delightful spectacle of Christians, of almost every variety of sentiment entertained by the orthodox, walking together in

* These "minor differences of opinion" had no relation at all to the doctrines and precepts of the Saviour. Ed.

† Probably at the expense of *truth*. Ed.

‡ See Bowes on Christian Union; a treatise of considerable research, and breathing an excellent spirit.

harmony and love. And could a community of Melancthons, Jewels, Latimers, Leightons, Baxters, Bates, and Howes be formed, how easy to forsee the delightful concord in which they would live together; merging their trivial differences in the magnificent truths which made them one; or alluding to those differences only in a way which enhanced their mutual esteem. And what is it but an inferior state of knowledge and piety, which prevents their professed descendants of the present day from honoring their principles, by exemplifying their catholic spirit?

III. "We do not entertain sentiments of hostility to any other branch of the Christian Church; nor do we desire the continuance of its present divisions; indeed, we long for the unity of the whole Church in the bond of peace." These professions *may* be made sincerely; but, often, it is to be feared, they are only the language of self-deception and schism. Can those who utter it be satisfied with making Christian love to consist in the bare absence of active hostility, or even of conscious dislike? Can mere professions of religious friendship, when unaccompanied by the natural evidences of Christian esteem and confidence, serve to demonstrate any thing but their insincerity? And as to the peace which they profess to sigh for—are they prepared to obtain it on any but the magnanimous condition that the universal Church shall capitulate and submit to their terms? They are clamorous for union; but then it must be by *uniformity*—of which their own church shall be the model; and *subjuga-*

tion—in which they alone shall remain supreme. All who differ from them being necessarily wrong, it would of course be treason to the cause of truth, to think of any alternative but perpetual war or unqualified submission. Quando solitudinem fecêre appellant pacem—*when they have made a desolation they will call it peace.* And thus under a pretended desire for union, they pertinaciously cherish the principles of division.

The Dissenter who employs the language supposed, should remember that, in order to evince his sincerity, he must inquire what aspect his particular church most probably presents to the Dissenters of other communities, and must labor to remove from it every thing unscriptural and repulsive: while, in relation to the members of the Established Church, he must be conscious of a readiness to make the necessary allowances for men in the possession of temporal superiority and legal power, to meet them in the spirit of liberal Christian concession, and laboriously and perseveringly to employ the various methods of scriptural conciliation. And the Churchman should remember that, if he would sincerely employ this language, he must be conscious of regret at the spirit of assumption which too generally pervades his community, and of a willingness to co-operate in the removal of those ecclesiastical restrictions in which principally that spirit originates. "Few churches," remarks Bishop Taylor,* "that have framed bodies of confession and articles

* Sections xxii., xxiii.

will endure any person that is not of the same confession ; which is a plain demonstration that such bodies of confession and articles do much hurt, by becoming instruments of separating and dividing communions, and making unnecessary or uncertain propositions a certain means of schism and disunion ..... As for particular churches, they are bound to allow communion to all those that profess the same faith upon which the apostles did give communion ; for whatsoever preserves us as members of the Church, gives us title to the communion of saints ; and whatsoever faith or belief that is to which God hath promised heaven, that faith makes us members of the Catholic Church. Since, therefore, the judicial acts of the Church are then most prudent and religious when they nearest imitate the example and piety of God, to make the way to heaven straiter than God made it, or to deny to communicate with those whom God will vouchsafe to be united, and to refuse our charity to those who have the same faith, because they have not all our opinions, and believe not every thing necessary which we overvalue, is impious and schismatical ; it infers tyranny on one part, and persuades and tempts to uncharitableness and animosities on both ; it dissolves societies, and is an enemy to peace ; it busies men in impertinent wranglings, and by names of men and titles of factions it consigns the interested parties to act their differences to the height, and makes them neglect those advantages which piety and a good life bring to the reputation of Christian religion and societies."

4. "But *the truth* must be maintained; you would not have us sacrifice *the truth*." Most freely do we admit that nothing connected with religion is unimportant, or absolutely indifferent; and, that, important as the harmony and peace of the Church may be, the interests of truth and holiness are still more so; partly, because they are the only foundation on which the temple of peace can be built. And most earnestly do we deprecate that latitudinarian indifference which would attempt reconciliation at the expense of truth, as evil in its origin, and highly dangerous in its tendency. The principles of revelation are immortal and immutable; and he who fancies that he has a dispensing power here, or who acts as if he had, by making a single concession to an object or a party at the expense of Truth, from that moment writes himself traitor to her throne, and becomes disqualified for her service.

We have to remind the objector, however, that there is a wide difference between denouncing schism and asking for the sacrifice of truth. If we could present him with no alternative between schism and uniformity—if we were to propose perfect unanimity of opinion instead of unanimity of affection—he would then have ground for repeating and urging his objection. But let him observe, first,—a truth which we have often repeated already—that we do not ask him to sacrifice his opinions, but only his unchristian bigotry. We do not ask the Independent to become an Episcopalian, nor the Episcopalian to become an Independent. We do not ask the Calvinist to change

sides with the Armenian, nor the Baptist with the Pædo-baptist: but only to exchange the visible expressions of that love which they ought mutually to cherish as heirs together of the grace of life. We have to remind him, secondly, that by maintaining his present position, he most likely *is* sacrificing the truth, in more senses than one; while by maintaining the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, he would be vindicating and magnifying the truth. At present he is saying in effect, The grand doctrines of salvation are nothing as a basis of Christian union, unless their reception be accompanied by certain shades of opinion which I myself have adopted; the fact that "God hath received him" into his favor, is no argument why I should receive him into communion, although inspired authority has affirmed that it is, unless he will consent to adopt every tittle of my creed:—and thus the truth as it is in Jesus is reduced to a level with truth as it is in a party. Whereas, by making those doctrines the ground of Christian union, he would be exalting them before the eyes of the world, and proclaiming, that so great and glorious are they in his estimation, that every thing else appears comparatively little. At present, he is sacrificing truth, also, by indulging his attachment to particular shades of opinion, at the expense of all that large portion of the Bible which inculcates love to the brethren. He is putting contempt on the truth by putting contempt on the brotherhood. He is disparaging so large and vital a portion of the Bible, that if he persist in sacrificing it, even though he retain every

other part, he is endangering his salvation. "I," said Baxter,—and the sentiment was worthy the inspired pen of the seraphic John—"I can as willingly be a martyr for *love* as for any article of the creed." But in his infatuated zeal for a punctilio or a party, the objector appears utterly to forget that there is such an article as love in his creed, or such a doctrine as love in the Bible. He defends some little angle or ornament in the temple of truth at the expense of one of the pillars. He contends for the *letter*—or rather perhaps for *a* letter—of the truth, in a way which tramples on the spirit which pervades the whole. Whereas, thirdly, we have to remind him that by cultivating catholic fellowship, he would be not merely not sacrificing the truth, not merely maintaining it, but most likely promoting his own peculiar views of it. He might still inculcate those views from the pulpit and the press, and recommend them by the amiable influence of his example; for controversy itself may be so conducted as to win esteem instead of alienating it. Love is a key which would afford him the readiest and the surest access to the hearts and consciences of others. If his peculiar views are scriptual, as they came down at first from the calm region of heaven, so their self-recommending excellence is more likely to be seen and appreciated in the serene atmosphere of peace than in any other. And as the whole system of revealed truth originated in the love which compassionated our fatal ignorance, is he not likely to be more successful in propagating it, the more he inculcates it in the spirit in which it was first conceived?

Let us ask the objector: if only one sect remained—and if that were a small sect distinguished from the great body of the faithful by believing that Christian communion was unnecessary, and the union of the Church a matter of indifference:—in other words, suppose that the only portion of truth which remained in the least jeopardy were the doctrine of brotherly love—what is the spirit in which he would contend for it? Surely he would not vindicate the claims of love in the spirit of anger. Surely he would not think of winning that little faction over, and of thus restoring the Church to its first integrity, by decrying and denouncing them. Brotherly love—the doctrine in question—would disown such means; it would dictate overtures of peace, point to its obvious advantages, seek for friendly interviews, be seen weeping, be heard interceding, and thus would it soon assert its known omnipotence, and lead them all in happy triumph. This would be contending for the truth with the only weapon which its Author permits: why will not the objector employ them now, and gain the victories of love?

5. "But are not divisions useful? have they not been the means of exciting emulation, quickening Christian activity, and of thus instrumentally diffusing the blessings of the Gospel?" When the objector utters this sentiment, he is probably thinking of instances in which a dissenting church, having divided, has sometimes succeeded in planting a second or even a third community; or else of the way in which Dissenters, by forming benevolent and

religious societies, are alleged to have been the means of arousing the dormant energies of the Establishment, and of inducing it to constitute similar societies. But let him remember that, in order to estimate the effects of hostile division, he should compare them, not with the effects of another evil—of supineness, heresy, or any other unscriptural state into which a church can fall—but with the probable effects which would result from the scriptural union of the divided parties, and from their harmonious obedience to the will of Christ. Let him remember that while the partial good resulting from this rivalry is apparent, and has probably been nearly reaped, the harvest of evil is yet to come, and can be estimated fully by Him alone who sees the end from the beginning. And let him remember, also, that not a tittle of that good which he exultingly points at, has resulted from our divisions properly considered; for we are not to suppose that the "God of order" has become the patron of confusion, sanctioning our disorders, and turning them into approved means of grace. The good referred to, has resulted from motives either right or wrong;—if from right motives, that is only saying that it has sprung, not from our divisions, but from our piety in spite of our divisions;—if from wrong motives, then it is to be ascribed entirely to the over-ruling providence of God: and our feelings in reference to it should resemble those of the penitent Jews on the day of Pentecost, when they saw that the blood they had shed on Calvary had been wonderfully made the element of human salvation—feelings of humility,

penitence, and adoring gratitude. As to an objector who should affirm, without any qualification, that the Church is better in a state of division than of union, we can only wonder at his not advancing a step further and affirming that no church whatever would be best of all—for to such a result his opinions would unquestionably lead. He is, in effect, avowing that had our Lord and his apostles acted wisely they would have formed, not one visible and united Church, but separate and rival communities, like those at present existing; that they would not have recorded sentiments deprecating and denouncing division, but rather encouraging it; that sectarianism is a great improvement on the original constitution of the Christian Church; that the prospect of the final union of the Church is to be zealously retarded by all who desire its prosperity; and, to be consistent, he ought to institute an inquiry whether the Church is yet sufficiently divided; and whether the piety and usefulness of that particular community of fifty or five hundred to which he may belong, would not be materially increased by minute subdivision; for if the division of the *entire Church* be a blessing, why should the separation of his *particular community* be regarded as an evil?

Having attempted an exposition of the evils of division, and shown the futility of the more popular objections to its removal by a restoration of Christian union, we are now prepared to entertain the subject which naturally follows in the ensuing chapter—the nature of the union to be sought.

CHAPTER IX.

THE KIND OF UNION TO BE ATTEMPTED.

To ask the Christian Church, in its present divided and distracted state, for an audience on the subject of its union, might at first appear to be a vain and useless request. Let us lay it down, however, at once, as an infallible proposition,

1. *That union is attainable; and that, sooner or later, it will be obtained.* The divisions of the Church are not to be perpetual. The name of Jehovah *shall* be one throughout all the earth. In the lapse of time, therefore, the period must arrive when the *first* movement towards that oneness shall be made. Amidst much that is apparently discouraging in the signs of the times, it may, we think, be made to appear that it is not an unseasonable nor a hopeless aim to attempt that movement *now*.

2. But, here, the first caution necessary is, that we do not set our standard of union too high. By attempting too much, the timid and cautious will be alarmed—the spirit of party will become vigilant and suspicious—and even wisdom and piety themselves, should they be

prevailed on to countenance the attempt, will do so hopeless of success. While we do not lose sight, then, of the scriptural model of primitive union, we must remember that the Church has, by a long period of disunion, disqualified itself for a sudden and complete return to that only and perfect state; and, while we readily admit that the agency of God *could*, perfectly, and at once, heal our breaches, yet instead of waiting for such a miracle, we must be content with making approximations, and gratefully accept every return to each other, as a proof that he is graciously returning to us.

3. Having erected our standard of union, we must not expect that any one party will concede more than ourselves, in order to meet it. If, in order to reach it, sacrifices are necessary, these sacrifices must be mutual. We must be prepared to give as much as we ask; and, instead of waiting till others move, we must ourselves set the example of concession in the hope of being followed. The glory of *leading* here is, in some respects, greater than that of the martyr's crown. When so much had been done at Marpurg to effect an agreement between Luther and the Helvetians, he magnanimously resolved that they should not make larger grants for peace, nor carry away the honor of being more desirous of union than he. Let a passion for this honor seize the Christian Church, and the work of reconciliation will be easy.

4. Let us not imagine that Christian union would *necessarily* follow if certain changes in ecclesiastical affairs could be effected. "We

might be awfully disappointed :* and we should most certainly be so, if we relied upon any external state of things, if we failed of a proportionate increase in watchfulness against sin, and devotedness to God; if we were not 'given to prayer;' if we did not realise all the objects of 'our most holy faith.'" We might all subscribe to the same creed—bow to the same human authority in religion—form a church nominally one; and yet, as it has often been with the church of Rome, our internal dissensions might almost realise the account of the infernal "portress," whose progeny having crept

> ———"into her womb,
> And kennelled there; yet there still barked and howled,
> Within, unseen."

5. We must not be disheartened or deterred from our attempt by the fact that similar attempts, in former times, have so generally failed. If they failed, we may rest assured that it was not owing to any obstacle interposed by the hand of God, but because the plan proposed was unscriptural in its nature, or attempted too much, or was made, or met, in an unscriptural spirit; yet even then there was probably much in it pleasing to God, and profitable to many of the parties engaged. Our aim must be, in the strength of God, to ascertain and avoid the rocks on which they foundered, and to steer our course with the Bible in our hand, and the glory of God in our eye; and then, "though Israel be not gathered" by our immediate ef-

* Rev. Dr. J. P. Smith.

forts, yet "shall we be glorious in the eyes of the Lord." We shall have entered a protest for God against the divisions of his people, and our example may stimulate the Christians of a later age to a more successful effort.

6. We must proceed under a calm, definite, deep sense of duty to God, and of the pressing exigencies of his Church. If we are actuated only by a momentary impulse, a thousand obstacles will arise to deter us from advancing. Some, whom we had expected to find most conceding and conciliatory, will prove exacting and repulsive. Others, from whom we had expected examples of magnanimity, will be found contending for trifles; simply because they have contended for them till to *them* they have ceased to be trifles; till they have become objects which, to their apprehensions, it would be treason to surrender, and is chivalry to defend. While "the love of many" whom we had expected to see burning for union, will "wax cold," and chill all around them. But if we have taken an enlightened survey of the necessities of the Church, and listened to the unfaltering voice of duty, none of these things will move us. Remembering that we are advancing along a path which the great Reconciler himself trod, "resisting unto blood," we shall "arm ourselves likewise with the same mind."

I. Union, to be permanent, *must be based on the supreme and sole authority of the word of God, and on the inalienable right of private judgment.* Any association in the Church, founded on principles which should overlook, or do violence, to either of these conditions,

however unanimously adopted by the parties first forming it, is sure, sooner or later, to be dissolved, and is likely to be attended with dissension till it is dissolved.

If the Bible be a revelation from God, its authority, on every subject to which it relates, must be regarded as paramount. To read that revelation is not merely the right but the duty of every human being—a right in relation to his fellow-men—a duty in relation to God. But if it be his duty to read, he is equally bound to read with the view of understanding its contents, and of following his convictions of its requirements. This obligation, arising from the dominion of God over his creatures, is, in the order of nature, prior to every other—and hence, no exercise of human authority can justly interfere with duties which are previously due to God. And as it is prior so is it superior to every other—no human power can discharge him from it—it comprehends the sovereign, the outlaw, and the obedient subject alike; for it regards men as moral and responsible agents—relations in which they all agree. And as the obligation cannot be removed from him by any human hand, neither can he himself devolve it on another. This is a birthright which he cannot sell. If his views of the will of God, and the obedience which he renders him, be not the result of his own conscientious convictions derived from the Bible, they are formality or impiety. His personal accountableness indeed does not forbid him the aids of an enlightened human interpretation of that word, but rather implies it; for such interpretation being accom-

panied by arguments and reasons, these reasons are necessarily submitted to his judgment; consequently, as far as they are concerned, he is still left to his convictions. And to imagine that an obedience flowing from any other source could be acceptable to God, is to suppose that he will be pleased even where there is no sincere intention to please him. Whereas man is as responsible for the nature of his professed obedience, as for his disobedience; nor can his faith or his worship approve itself to God as an expression of love, only in so far as it approves itself to his own conviction as that which the word of God requires. To form and follow his own convictions of the revealed will of God is an inalienable right of which no human being can justly deprive him, and an imperative duty from which no created authority can absolve him.

The supremacy of the word of God, and the rights of conscience, are the grand though simple principles of the Reformation; and the Protestant who undervalues them is saying, in effect, Let us relapse again into the bosom of the Romish church. Acting consistently on these, we shall not attempt a unity which means uniformity; which substitutes submission to authority for the investigation of truth; which prevents a difference of opinion by allowing no opinion at all. We shall be jealous for the honor of the Bible, and tender of the right of others to judge for themselves of its meaning, as conditions involving our own liberty and well-being. We shall allow to each his denominational differences, and yet receive him as a believer in Christ.

But not only do the principles in question prohibit every attempt at union at the expense of Christian liberty, they powerfully tend to produce union compatible with that liberty. Suppose there were at present only a small number of Christians upon earth, and these living apart, and ignorant of each other's existence—suppose that they were ignorant of the existence of even a *written* revelation, and that the sum total of their doctrinal belief amounted simply to this, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners—suppose that, living under the influence of this fundamental and saving truth, they felt an earnest desire for Christian communion, without knowing where to obtain it—that, in order to gratify this desire, and to organise them into a society, the Divine Redeemer had assembled them together—and suppose that thus ignorant and thus assembled, he should then introduce them to each other as mutually desirous of Christian communion, and should produce the Book, saying, "Behold the charter of your common salvation; within its sacred pages you will find a warrant, and even a command for the fellowship you seek. In every question that may arise concerning the cultivation of that fellowship, consult and submit to its authority as supreme; and, should a difference of opinion obtain concerning the interpretation of any part of that authority, regard each other as following his conscientious views of that authority, and love each other on that account." Would they not feel that even in the mutual adoption of the Book, the preliminaries of union were already settled? In the

common reception of the Bible as the word of God, and in the acknowledgment of its supremacy, together with the consequent duty of every man to follow his conscientious views of its dictates, is laid the foundation, and the only foundation, on which can be built the temple of Christian peace. But where is the Protestant Christian, or Christian denomination, which does not professedly admit and admire that foundation? Here, then, is the first essential to Christian union, already—by supposition, at least—in our possession.

II. The second essential, and naturally following from the former, *is substantial oneness of faith.* Without such an agreement there could be no Christian motive to unite; preaching, would be perpetual controversy; and intercourse, pure contention. While more than *substantial* agreement is unnecessary and unattainable. But this is not only attainable, it already exists. Justification by faith in the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God, together with the doctrines which it necessarily involves, is held alike by Episcopalian and Presbyterian, Independent, Methodist, Baptist, and Friend, and by all the orthodox sections of which the Christian community consists. Now, suppose again that the assembly we have just imagined, having received the Book, and unanimously agreed to follow its dictates, should proceed, in companies, to ascertain its essential doctrines. Would it not surprise and delight them to find that they had all arrived at the same conclusion? that on the great basis of evangelical doctrine they were already one? And would

they not be ready to conclude that as nothing could separate them from the love of Christ, so nothing could possibly arise to sever them from the love of each other in him. Here, then, is a second essential to Christian unity, in present existence.

III. But the belief of the Gospel is valuable only so far as it *renews the heart and forms the character to holiness*. What is the design of the whole economy of mercy, but to rescue a portion of our race ruined by sin; to expel that sin from their nature; and to restore them to holiness and heaven? And what is the Church of Christ, but the society of those on whom that lofty design has begun to take effect, collected into a community preparatory to their translation to the general assembly above? To unite with any others in Christian fellowship would be highly undesirable and opposed to the will of God, even were such union possible; for as well might Christians disband and unite with the world, as to receive the world into their communion; the effect in each case would be the same—the destruction of the spiritual character of the faithful. Nor would it be possible, if desirable; for what communion hath light with darkness, or what fellowship hath Christ with Belial? The union sought then is *a fellowship of Christians;* and, consequently, that church whose communion is the most pure, is the most eligible, and likely to be the most ready, for catholic union.

IV. Such an association would be necessarily *cemented by brotherly love*. Having all experienced a change which had impressed the

same image on every heart, they would love as brethren. Nothing less than this will satisfy the demands of Scripture;—no unity of opinion in the bond of ignorance—no unity of profession in the bond of hypocrisy—nothing, but the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace: for "love is the fulfilling of the law." "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." And nothing less than such love will satisfy Christians themselves, for they "are taught of God to love one another." They do not find it necessary to labor to love each other; brotherly love is a principle common to every Christian, and its exercise is spontaneous: "we know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

V. But this love will necessarily discover itself in appropriate acts and expressions; and thus the union will be *made visible to the world.* One of these visible expressions of love to each other, the Head of the Church has himself specifically appointed in the ordinance of "the Lord's supper." Though this, indeed, is not, as some seem to imagine, the whole of Christian fellowship, it is a most vital and important branch of it; and though it denotes also communion with God, it does not the less imply communion with each other. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion, or joint participation, of the blood of Christ? the bread which we break, is it not a joint participation of the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we, the many, are one body; for we

are all partakers of that one bread."* The *moral* of the ordinance may be expressed in the language of St. John, "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." Hence, in its celebration, we are commanded to put away "the leaven of malice and wickedness"—to cultivate benevolent feelings towards the entire brotherhood. Never does the Christian Church appear more distinctly in its proper character as the family of God, than when it is observing this ordinance; and is it from this family feast that the children are to be excluded?† It is an epitome of that heavenly multitude, in which "all nations, tribes, and tongues," breathe the same spirit, and appear in the same character—that of redeemed sinners; and is it the harmony of such a scene that we would mar by the enforcement of our peculiarities? Shall the great symbol of our common Christianity be degraded into the badge and criterion of a party; Shall the rite which more than any other is adapted to cement mutual attachment, and which is in a great measure appointed for that purpose, be fixed upon as the line of demarcation to separate and disjoin the followers of Christ? A union which should propose to omit the communion of Christians, or of churches, in this ordinance, would be radically defective and unscriptural;

* 1 Cor. x. 16, 17. This is the translation of Grotius, Diodati, and Castalio; also of Waterland, Bishop Pearce, and many others.

† The spirit of these remarks is very commendable; but the writer evidently has very lax views of the scriptural qualifications for communion. Ed.

and the church which intentionally places an obstacle in the way of such communion, or knowingly allows it to remain, is obviously opposing the will of God.

VI. Unanimity of heart would infallibly produce *unanimity of action in the Christian cause.* Impelled by the same motive towards the same object, what could result but harmonious progress together? The relative design of an individual conversion is, that the man may become an instrument of good to others. For the same object, a number of converts are to be organised into a particular church; that their union may be strength. But for the same reason that we combine as Christians to form a particular church, we should unite as churches and denominations. The very circumstance of our union itself would attract notice; and hence the object of our Lord's supplication that his people might be one was, that the world might perceive that the Father had sent him. The institution of the Christian Church is meant to economise and combine all the energies and passions of sanctified humanity; to collect all the scattered agencies of good which earth contains, and to organise them into a vast engine whose entire power should be brought to bear on the conversion of the world. The practicability of such co-operation among Christians of different denominations, has long been demonstrated in the constitution and working of the British and Foreign Bible Society, and of the Religious Tract Society. In the former of these, Christians of different persuasions are seen, merging their peculiar opinions on the

minor topics of revelation, and uniting before the world in the grand assertion, that the Bible is the pure word of God—that on all subjects of a religious nature, its authority is supreme—that every human being possesses the sacred right, and is under a solemn obligation, to examine and follow its dictates—that on all its distinctive and leading doctrines they are one—and that their firm conviction is, that its universal circulation and cordial reception would be attended with the holiest, happiest, and most heavenly results. In the latter Society, Christians of various denominations combine to circulate those great truths in which they all agree, and which they believe to be the only truths essential to salvation. The subject of baptism, forms of church government, and whatever distinguishes them as members of particular communities, are here held in abeyance. These, in the spirit of moderation, they can discuss in other forms, and at other times. But here they unite, as Christian members of the one universal Church, to propagate among their perishing fellow-men the truths on which their own souls rely for eternal life; and thus tell the world, that in the cause of their Redeemer's glory, and of human salvation, they are one. While the public anniversaries of these noble institutions, as well as of most of our Missionary Societies, have often been festivals of Christian love, "such as heaven stoops down to see."

At some of our foreign missionary stations, also, where the strifes and estrangements of home are forgotten, the frequent union of min-

isters and churches of different persuasions exhibits a delightful spectacle of Christian harmony and love. Why should not parallel scenes, and on a grander scale, be witnessed at home? Why should not ministers who associate on the platform reciprocate in the hallowed employment of the pulpit? If the Episcopalian clergyman be welcome to the pulpit of the Dissenter, why should not Dissenting ministers be admitted to the pulpits of the Establishment? "Why must the Scotch Presbyterians alone have the benefit of the instructions of Dr. Chalmers in London, when every pulpit of the Establishment ought to welcome him? Why must Dr. Cooke betake himself to Surrey Chapel? Why must the Dissenters alone listen to Dr. Wardlaw, or Mr. Jay? The objection, that bad doctrine might thus be taught by the Dissenters from the pulpits of the Establishment is not valid. If a clergyman wish for bad doctrine, what is to hinder him finding it in the Establishment? And if he does not wish for it, he would not admit an unsound Congregationalist, any more than he would an unsound Episcopalian now, to preach for him."* Surely such restrictions are not to be continued for ever! Even if they are prolonged till that millennial period which is the prevailing hope of the Christian Church, surely they will vanish then! How ill would they harmonise with its *communion of saints*, or consist with the light, liberty, and prosperity of its *holy catholic Church!* But who shall say how much that period would be

* Fundamental Reform, &c., by a Clergyman.

hastened by their prompt and voluntary removal now? At present, how little comparatively do we know of each other; and as that little relates principally to our differences and our faults, how necessarily does it increase dislike, and widen our divisions! on the other hand, let us only meet on common ground, hail each other as auxiliaries to the same grand cause, and co-operate for the common interests of the world, and how necessarily would our groundless dislikes give place to a feeling that would deprecate every project to disjoin, and welcome only such measures as tended more closely to unite! If it be true of the blessed God, that "they who know his name will put their trust in him," it must be true in a subordinate but corresponding sense, that the more his people, as such, know of each other—of their mutual resemblance to him, their common concern for the salvation of the world, and their zeal for his glory—the more sincerely will they admire each other's piety, and the more will they unite for the achievement of their common object.

VII. If we do not add, that *Christians should be one in name*, it is not because we regard such oneness as unimportant, or as *ultimately* unattainable; but because we believe that it will be among the latest triumphs, if not the very crowning act of brotherly love. Whereas the unity which we would now inculcate seems more proximate, and would of itself be sufficient to render Christians, though still distinct in name, in substance one. What is of much more immediate importance, and more easily attainable, and more urgently enforced

in Scripture, is, that *the union of Christians should be visible.* For this our Saviour prayed; and prayed for it as a requisite to the conversion of the world. It is in vain to reply that his followers are now, and ever have been, one, as members of that one body of which he is the glorified Head. This is *known* only to the Church in heaven; and *understood* only by the Church on earth; whereas the world must *see* it. Our Jerusalem, like that of old, must both be "builded as a city that is compact together," and be "set upon a hill." Evidence must be given to the *senses* of men, that not merely in profession, but in heart and object, we are one. The fact should be too plain to be misunderstood; and too palpable to remain a secret.

Now the elements of union which we have described, include all that is necessary to produce this visibility. By practically admitting the supremacy of the word of God, we should feel ourselves called on to revise the constitution of the Church to which we belong, and to remove from it whatever infringed on that supremacy, or even appeared to assume an equality with it. And by acting on the universal right of private judgment, we should perceive the inconsistency of all ecclesiastical assumption and imposition, and deprecate every thing like penalty or degradation for exercising that right; and thus some of the principal roots of bitterness would at once and effectually be cut up and destroyed. Born into the same family, adoring the same Redeemer, making his character our common model, the salvation of the

world for which he died our common solicitude, and his glory our only end, what would result but the visible oneness of all who answered to this description? In order to render the spectacle perfect, indeed, the union should be one of churches and denominations, as such; but even short of this, such a union of individual Christians—of a considerable number of the members of different denominations—would of itself be a pledge and prelude of the speedy and complete union of the whole, and even of the approaching conversion of the world. Like the friendly provinces of the same continent, speaking the same language, living in allegiance to the same sovereign, and engaged in mutual and general traffic, the Church would present one scene of spiritual commerce, carried on chiefly for the advantage of the world, and visible to the universe. God would bless us, and all the ends of the earth would fear him.

CHAPTER X.

THE WAY IN WHICH UNION SHOULD BE SOUGHT.

WERE we to present a sketch of all the attempts which have been made to preserve or restore the unity of the Church, they would be found to consist of three kinds.

First. Those which have aimed to repress diversity of religious opinion, and to produce outward conformity to a given standard, *by employing the principle of coercion.* Of this nature are all authoritative "Creeds," "Forms of Concord," Ecclesiastical "Henoticons," or "Edicts of Union," "Acts against Schism," Royal "Concordats," and "Acts of Uniformity," "Fines," imprisonments, and punishments inflicted by the civil power. Constantine, who was the first to employ the material sword in the Church, and who did so apparently with the sincere desire of restoring the peace of the Church, no sooner discovered its inefficacy than he retraced his steps. Happy had it been for Christendom if the Church had been convinced by the result of his single experiment. Since then, however, it has been repeated in every age, and its failure has as often followed.

The history of religious coercion includes the great "Book of Martyrs:" its spirit is directly opposed to the genius of the Gospel; and its inutility, as well as its schismatic tendency, is seen in the present divided state of the Christian Church.

Second. Those who have employed *argumentative discussion* with the view of obtaining concession and compromise. Of this nature have been the numerous "Public Disputations," "Charitable and Religious Conferences," as well as many Diets and Councils—assembled, sometimes by royal authority, and sometimes voluntarily, by the mutual desire of those composing them; in which authority, learning, wit, wisdom, argument, ingenuity, persuasion, friendship, piety, and patience, all were present and exhausted their resources; but the result of which has been, generally speaking, that the breach has been made wider than before. "The more men dispute," observes Douglas, in his "Errors of Religion," "the less likely are they ever to agree. In an argument, it is not what an opponent is saying, but the *answer* which is to be given to him, that is considered. . . . . Disputants, inflamed against each other, mutually withdraw from each other's errors, regardless that they are leaving the truth, from which they have both departed, in the middle between them! and each looking only at the mistakes of the other, is confident that he must be in the right, because his opponent is in the wrong."

The third, proceeds on the catholic principle of uniting on the great basis of evangelical doc-

trine in which we already agree, and of exercising mutual forbearance on all subordinate matters. This is the only plan which now remains for the Church to pursue; and this is the scriptural plan. "That union among Christians which it is so desirable to recover, must, we are persuaded, be the result of something more heavenly and divine than legal restraints or angry controversies. Unless an angel were to descend for that purpose, the spirit of division is a disease which will never be healed by troubling the waters. We must expect the cure from the increasing prevalence of religion, and from a copious communication of the Spirit to produce that event. . . . . The general prevalence of piety in different communities would inspire that mutual respect, that heartfelt homage for the virtues conspicuous in the character of their respective members, which would urge us to ask with astonishment and regret, Why cannot we be one? What is it that obstructs our union?"* Shame —everlasting shame on the Church, that the efficacy of this plan should yet remain to be tried!

1. But the success even of this plan materially depends, under God, on the spirit and manner in which it is pursued. Most of the introductory remarks in the preceding chapter relative to *the kind of union sought*, are equally applicable here, concerning *the way in which it should be attempted.* We should cherish the firmest conviction that, as there is the right

* Hall's Zeal without Innovation.

kind of union, and as that union will ultimately obtain, *so there is the right method of attempting* it; and that method we are under an obligation to ascertain and put into practice.

2. As we should not erect our standard of union too high, *neither should we be too sanguine or impatient concerning its adoption.* To the majority of Christians, the subject is as yet comparatively novel: and as it would not be desirable that their compliance should outrun their enlightened convictions; so we must expect that even after such convictions are produced, early prejudices and mutual distrust will still for a while maintain their ground. "This kind goeth not forth but by" the spirit of love.

3. However we may deplore what we may deem unscriptural in the constitution and usages of other churches, *we should never contemplate their conformity to* OUR *model without much self-distrust.* Every proposition with which we are acquainted for absorbing other sects in any given denomination, has worn, at least, a very questionable aspect; many of them are too arrogant and sectarian to leave their origin in doubt.

4. Excellent documents have been drawn up from time to time by the healing spirits of the Church, under the names of "Declarations," "Comprehensions," and "Forms of Agreement"—to be subscribed by the Christians of different persuasions as the basis of their union. We confess, however, that we have no faith in the utility of such measures as the means of promoting union. *That* union to be scriptural

must be the *effect* of love: if that love exists already, such subscriptions are unnecessary: and if it do not, subscription is a poor substitute for it. Besides which, such documents themselves are almost certain, sooner or later, to become the occasions of contention.

"Some have endeavored to reunite these fractions," writes Bishop Taylor, in his introduction to the Liberty of Prophesying, "by propounding such a guide which they were all bound to follow; hoping that the unity of a guide would have persuaded unity of minds; but who this guide should be, at last became such a question, that it made part of the fire that was to be quenched, so far was it from extinguishing any part of the flame. Others thought of a rule, and this must be the means of union, or nothing could do it. But supposing all the world had been agreed of this rule, yet the interpretation of it was so full of variety, that this also became a part of the disease for which the cure was pretended. All men resolved upon this, that though they yet had not hit upon the right, yet some way must be thought upon to reconcile differences in opinion; thinking, so long as this variety should last, Christ's kingdom was not advanced, and the work of the Gospel went on but slowly. Few men in the meantime considered, that so long as men had such variety of principles, such several constitutions, educations, tempers, and distempers, hopes, interests, and weaknesses, degrees of light, and degrees of understanding, it was impossible all should be of one mind. And what is impossible to be done is

not necessary it should be done; and, therefore, although variety of opinions was impossible to be cured, (and they who attempted it did like him who claps his shoulder to the ground to stop an earthquake,) yet the inconveniences arising from it might possibly be cured, not by uniting their beliefs,—that was to be despaired of,—but by curing that which caused these mischiefs, and accidental inconveniences of their disagreeings."

5. Nor would we advocate the formation of *a new Denomination*—including Christians of various persuasions—*as a means of promoting union.* As far as such a step may be the *result* of mutual love, it would assuredly occasion joy among the angels in the presence of God. But if adopted, formally, as an *experiment* or *a means*, it would want the cordiality—the central fire of love—which would be necessary to fuse the parties into one consolidated whole, and to convince the world that they were one in more than in name.

I. If we would prepare our minds for the subject of Christian union, let us come to it from the study of ecclesiastical history. Could all the lessons which that history teaches be summed up in one word, that word would surely be MODERATION. And if all Christians could arise together from its unprejudiced and devotional perusal, the effect could only be one —to induce them to strike hands in a covenant of mutual forbearance and love.

II. Let us consider also the natural history and necessary imperfections of the human mind. How impotent is our reason, how dark our un-

derstanding, how wayward our passions, how deeply rooted our prejudices. How more than probable is it that no two individuals pass through precisely the same process in reaching their religious conclusions—that early propensities, prescribed courses of study, domestic and local impressions, artificial habits of thought, physical temperament, future prospects, and the infinite complication of influences through which we pass, make it impossible for any two persons ever to see the same object from the same point of view, or through exactly the same medium, so that, in effect, they never see absolutely the same object. How more than probable is it that a *slight* change in our circumstances would have produced a *great* change in our opinions; and that if the judgment of any one is to be a standard to the world, there are thousands more eligible than ours. So that unless we can show that by some magic charm, or miraculous exemption, we have escaped the disturbing influences incident to humanity, and can claim perfection, we need the forbearance of our fellow-Christians; and the tenderness we need for ourselves, we shall feel bound to extend to others.

III. Let us make, in thought, a tour of the British churches—or, if we please, of Christendom; and, having admired the deep devotional spirit which marks the worship of one community, the unction which pervades the preaching of another, the purity and primitive simplicity of a third, the pecuniary liberality of a fourth, the characteristic freedom, activity, and zeal, of a fifth, the self-correcting power and careful

discipline of a sixth, the constitutional compactness and unity of a seventh, and the rapid improvement of an eighth—let us say, is there nothing in all this which should enlarge our charity towards other churches, and which we wish to see copied by our own? Superior on the whole, as we may allowably believe our own community to be, do we need to be reminded that it admits of improvement; and that the particular excellence which it most requires, is most likely already existing and even flourishing in some other church? We surely do not believe that the religion of a party, as parties now exist, will ever be the religion of the world; so that even if *our* community should ultimately prove to be the one nearest perfection, it will have to undergo considerable modification before it can receive universal extension. "Taking the three great forms of church government, Episcopacy, Presbyterianism, and Congregationalism, I should proceed thus:*—These three systems of discipline, brought honestly and impartially to the test of Scripture, are all right and all wrong,—though right and wrong in different degrees. There is something in the record in favor of all, but the book is not the exclusive property of any. There is more, perhaps, in support of each than the thoroughgoing advocates of the others will admit. There is more of episcopacy than is quite palatable to the presbyterian and the independent; there is more presbyterianism than the independent and the episcopalian can easily digest;

* Rev. T. Binney.

and there is more of congregationalism than either the priest or the presbyter can manage to get rid of." And do we not know that the wisest and the most magnanimous of each party are the readiest to admit this—that many of them frankly allow that every existing system, *in its practical working*, requires many deviations from the *letter* of its principles—that no single existing system takes in every opportunity and mode of doing good—that, could a plan be devised, for instance, combining the uniting principle and the power of Episcopacy and Presbyterianism with the local freedom and activity of Congregational Independence, it would bring the constitution of our churches much nearer to the apostolic model than any of the prevailing systems? But even such a plan would no doubt admit of still farther improvement; and, when completed, its greatest excellence perhaps would be, that it allowed an occasional departure from its own rules—that it only asked to be treated as a means subordinate to an end infinitely greater.

IV. From different churches, let us turn to their individual members; and are we not constrained to admit, as Howe did, that "of every differing party, we know some by whom we find ourselves much excelled in things far greater than those in which we differ?" And if so, must not that system need revision, and that state of mind call for humiliation, which prevents us from taking them to our heart? Let us remember that individual or *Christian* communion may precede *church* communion, *and be the means of leading to it;* just as the inter-

communion of some denominations may precede and produce the union of the Church universal. It is almost proverbial that men may be better than the creed they profess; and it is equally true that they may be more catholic than the community to which they belong. Although belonging to a schismatical and exclusive church, they may be disposed to cultivate a universal sympathy with Christian excellence. And the state of things wanted is that in which we shall not refuse to commune with them as Christians, because we cannot commune with them as Episcopalians or Independents; nor refuse to hold *partial* fellowship with them, because our fellowship with them cannot be complete; but that which, like the magnet rolled in the dust, and drawing to itself every kindred particle, will attract and unite the catholic and Christian of every church.

V. And in order to realise this state of things for ourselves, and to promote it in the Church generally, how few Christians need to acquire any new views on the subject; were they only to carry out acknowledged principles, and to reduce existing views to practice, the change desired would be effected. We profess, for instance, to believe in the supreme authority of the word of God, and in the right of every man to follow his own convictions of its dictates. Let us act consistently with our profession, and we shall not, we cannot, look coldly on a Christian brother for conscientiously following such convictions, even though they conduct him to conclusions differing, in some respects, from our own. To punish him with the

loss of our sympathy on this account is to say, either that *he* does not possess the right of private judgment, and thus to relinquish our own right; or else we are convicting ourselves of gross inconsistency and bigotry. Let us act consistently with our profession, and we shall not only not exclude him from our sympathies, we shall feel that the system or the state of things, which in any way depresses him for exercising an acknowledged right, must be wrong—that we are bound to do all we can to remedy the evil—and that till then, he is entitled to more even than an ordinary measure of our Christian regard.

VI. We have shown that the union sought is that which is based on the common reception of evangelical doctrines. Let us ask ourselves, if, in the church to which we belong, Christian union is built on these doctrines *alone;* and, if it be not, let us remember that in proportion as we increase the number of requisites to communion, we multiply the occasions of dissension and division. *That* union is not likely to be firm and lasting, the centre of which is a trifle, or which even includes trifles. While the more we reduce the number of those things which the Gospel warrants us to regard as essential to Christianity, the more attractive and binding the centre of our unity, the larger the sphere of our Christian charity, and the greater the number of Christians and Christian churches comprehended and embraced in our views of the brotherhood. If we belong to an exclusive church, and do not see it our duty to leave that church, we are bound to do all we can for its

improvement, and to evince more than ordinary concern to conciliate the Christians of other communions. That church is but little prepared to unite with others, which is in a state of disunion within itself; but in all our attempts to draw the members of our own communion nearer to each other, we must be careful that we employ no measures calculated to draw them to a greater distance from other communities.

VII. Having rejected all terms of communion which are not terms of salvation,* and thus narrowed as much as possible the conditions of Christian fellowship, *we should then be ready to fraternise with all whom we regard as practical believers, and with such only.* To admit an ungodly man into the Church of Christ, and to reject a sincere Christian, are acts equally schismatic in their tendency: in the former case we are admitting an element of division, and in the latter rejecting an element of union. So that to make the Church more holy, and to make it catholic and one, are the same thing. Till men have fellowship with God in the participation of the blessings of redemption, they may profess the same creed, and be united in the common enjoyment of outward privileges; but they can know nothing of that sacred union of kindred spirits which constitutes the happiness of Christians below, and the glory of heaven above. But *all* whom he forms and actuates by his Spirit, and admits to communion with him-

* By what authority? Ed.

self, are made free of his Church universal;* and it is at our peril that we impede their communion with any part of it. Let evangelical piety, then, be the only and sufficient passport to our hearts, and our churches.

VIII. When a schism existed in the church at Corinth, the remedy which the apostle prescribed as infallible, was *the cultivation of brotherly love.*† Again, when consulted respecting the divisions in the church at Colosse—when he describes himself as enduring *an agony* for the maintainance of their union—and when we might suppose, therefore, that his deep solicitude would omit the recommendation of no means essential to that oneness, his great and only expedients were, that they would take a firmer grasp of evangelical doctrine, and that their "hearts might be knit together in love."‡ And were he now to address an epistle to the churches of Britain respecting their divided state, the probability is that an important part of its burden would be the cultivation of that Christian charity which beareth and believeth, hopeth and endureth all things. Nothing, nothing can supply its place; while *it* would infallibly bring every requisite to union in its train. Oh, if we would see the unhappy divisions of the Church cemented, let us try the virtue of this healing principle. Let us "love the brotherhood"—not the particular community only to which we immediately belong—this is to love factiously, to love in a way which divides more

* Assertion without proof. Ed.
† 1 Cor. xiii. ‡ Col. iii. 2.

than it unites—but the Christian character *as such*. Wherever it exists, let our love flow towards it, as bearing the royal image and superscription of our common Lord. Let us see to it that our union with a particular church exists independently of our common sympathy with certain peculiar views; and our union with the church universal in defiance of such views. Let us aim to acquire clear and enlarged views of the great central truths of religion, that every thing else may appear comparatively trivial, and that our differences respecting them may become trivial also. Instead of condemning our brethren for their fidelity to their convictions of the revealed will of Christ, let us honor their conscientiousness, and rejoice that the Lord of conscience has such faithful subjects. Never let us impute to their doctrines inferences which they disown; nor to their proceedings evil motives which are not apparent. So far from shunning their society, let us cultivate friendly intercourse with the excellent of every name; owning them before the world as our brethren, defending their reputation, honoring their piety and usefulness, and seeking occasions for evincing our sympathy and Christian regard. Were such a spirit to obtain amongst us, its eye would discern excellences where before we had seen nothing but faults; its mantle would be thrown over defects which before had been exposed to the sun; and its tongue would insinuate truth through the medium of the heart, which mere argument or evidence could never induce the reason to receive. Were such a spirit to prevail amongst us, remarks Howe, as soon should

we think of confining our affection to men of our own stature, as to those of our own party; as soon should we suspect our right hand of designs against our left, as indulge suspicions of each other's hostile intentions. As soon should we think of being angry with the colors of a rainbow, as with the particular shading or mingling of a truth in a brother's creed, if, at the same time, we saw that it "was round about the head" of Him that sits on the throne. The sparks of jealousy and passion which our little collisions have occasioned, and which the breath of an infernal agency is ever applied to inflame, would fade and be extinguished before the solar fires of love; while those differences themselves would either melt into one common form, or else we should feel no inconvenience whatever from their continuance. As often as we mingled together at the table of our common Lord, we should feel ourselves drawn closer to each other, by coming nearer to Him, the great centre of the whole. And to *feel* that we are one in him, would serve in the stead of a thousand arguments to promote peace, and be a surer bond of lasting union, than a thousand ingenious schemes of human device; while the very absence of such schemes and formal professions would be the strongest evidence of the reality of our love. We feel *now*, that the simplest description of love is its highest praise; we should find then, that every act in its service was its own high reward that, as it survives the existence of faith and hope, and is the only principle that ascends from earth to heaven, so it can now bring heaven down to earth; mak-

ing it impossible for those who have lived in its calm and holy light ever to descend again into the dark and stormy regions of unsanctified passions. Oh that we were Christians!

IX. Let us co-operate with our brethren, as far as we can without compromising principle, in plans of general usefulness: which is only saying, "Let us not love in word only, but also in deed and in truth." How mournful and disgraceful is the fact, that, whereas, a few years ago, the origination of a benevolent institution on catholic principles was the signal for the best men of all parties to unite, a similar proposition now would be almost sure to originate a party measure in direct opposition! Is it not the fact that many a school, association, and society, have been set on foot, not because they were felt by their originators to be necessary, but solely because, in each instance, a similar institution had been projected by Christians of another name; so that its supporters are actually held together, by no sympathy of love to each other, or for their object, but by sheer sympathy of hostility to those other Christians? All the *good* they intend by the effort is, to supersede or dispossess those Christians; and should they succeed in this object, their own institution itself is discontinued, as having answered the great end for which it was commenced. Alas, alas, for the Christian name!

Let us bless God however, that there is common ground of benevolent activity on which thousands of Christians of various names continue to unite still—that *one* bond, at least, of their *visible* union remains yet unbroken. And

it is the growing conviction of the writer that, as this is almost the last ligament which visibly holds them together, so it is likely to be the first and the principal means which God will employ in again restoring them to each other's love. Whether he will compel us thus to unite in mere self-defence against the counter activity of a world whose interests we are betraying and neglecting by our divisions; or whether by an effusion of the spirit of love and zeal, he may lead us to think more of the will of Christ, than of the claim of party, we stay not now to inquire. But judging of the superior facilities for union which plans of benevolent activity present, and from the deepening conviction of Christians that such combination is made essential to the conversion of the world, we repeat our belief that *benevolent co-operation* is likely to be the principal means of restoring Christian union.

And oh, if Christians were wise for God, how invaluable an opportunity for uniting to advance his kingdom now presents itself in the religious education of the rising race! Whether general education be desirable or not is no longer the question—it has become inevitable—the only question left open is, whether it shall be good or bad. Never could a conjunction of circumstances be more favorable than the present for rendering that education all that piety and patriotism could desire—a new generation thirsting for instruction—the great majority of the adult population, not merely admitting the existence of the want, but even clamorous that it should be satisfied—the government willing to meet the demand—and all looking to the Chris-

tian denominations, and waiting for nothing but their united assent and cordial co-operation. The youthful mind of the nation is placed at their disposal; let them seize the opportunity and unite in training it for God, and the latest posterity will reap the advantage and bless them for it; but let them neglect it—it is passing—and never may it return again, but will certainly pass into the hands of a power which will teach it to laugh at their divisions, and to trample on their weakness. Where is the wisdom equal to the crisis? and what a motive to supplicate a speedy effusion of the great uniting Spirit!

Christian reader, take not your views of duty from any mere party-point; or they will certainly be narrow, low, disgraceful to that name which is destined to absorb every other—the great name of Christ. If you are active only *with* a party, is there not reason to fear that you are active only *for* a party? Or do you find a luxury in any of those annual festivals of love, where Christians of various denominations unite for the promotion of a common object? Seek, then, to enjoy such communion more frequently still. Ascend that mount of vision which commands the field of the world; let your survey take in the whole; how vast the multitudes! how urgent and awful their condition! how brief the hour for benefiting them! how mighty the interest pending on that short hour! Wherever your eye falls, it encounters some signal to be active; some object in an imploring or commanding attitude, urging you to come to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against

the mighty. Take such a survey, and we will defy you to be inactive, or to be active only for a party. You will dissolve into compassion for the world. You will join hearts with all who bear the family likeness of Christ. You will think only of swelling *his* train; of proselyting to *his one* Church. You will feel that you are an agent for Christ; that you stand related to that infinite circumference of good of which he is the central glory. You will pray for a blessing upon yourself, and your own particular church, only that the whole may be benefited, and the world saved. You will hold yourself free for the embrace of great plans of operation; rejoice, like the spirits above, in the prosperity of a part of the Church, as implying the welfare of the whole; and the only contention you will view with complacency will be that of the vine with the olive, which shall bear the best and most abundant fruit.

X. 1. With all these means, *prayer* must be conjoined—*social* prayer—social prayer expressly *for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit.* The evident absence of brotherly love, and the general prevalence of estrangement and asperity, demonstrate how little, how very little the Christians of different communities pray *for each other.* There is that in the very nature of prayer for another which brings us into the closest union with him. Having taken his case to the footstool of Mercy, and having thus, in a sense, espoused it and made it our own, we feel our peace and happiness involved in the success of our suit. Now, *could* we plead thus, in private, for the visible union of the faithful, without

coming forth from the closet in a healing spirit of concession, mediation, and love? Or, if a number of Christians of different persuasions were to "agree to ask" for each other, in their separate devotions, a spirit of forbearance, tenderness, and mutual affection, and were they to meet together immediately afterwards, would it not be to exchange a more cordial grasp, and more confiding looks of brotherly love?

2. But if this state of feeling would be the happy result of our private supplications for each other, how much more would it ensue from our united requests! If, in conversation, we are sometimes drawn towards each other, and see our heart reflected in the heart of our brother, how much more are the responses of the soul called forth by prayer! How *could* we feel estranged from the heart which had poured itself forth before God in our behalf? How *could* we hear him entreat of God, as a high favor, to be more closely united with us, without becoming conscious of a desire to be more closely united to him? How *could* mutual claims and rights be disregarded, or any of the social graces languish, among those who had thus mingled together their tenderest and purest feelings at the throne of their common Father? Would they not—must they not—delightfully feel that they "are all one in Christ Jesus?" and would not the feeling necessarily and visibly embody itself before the world?

3. But not only are we to pray for union, and to pray for it socially, we are to honor the Divine arrangements by imploring that it may be effected in his own appointed way—by the

effusion of his Holy Spirit. By simply praying for the blessing of union with our brethren, we are merely bringing our own spirits to the object; but the triumph of prayer is to bring another Spirit, the Almighty Spirit, to accomplish it, and to become the one soul of the Church. By the former we are only acting negatively—ceasing to be obstacles to each other's union—laying our hearts together like precious metals in the crucible, and offering them to the action of a higher agency; by the latter, we are drawing down that melting and transforming power which is to fuse the whole and to impress it with the Divine image.

And, here, let us remember,—1. That the divisions of the Church are expressly attributed in Scripture to the absence of the Spirit. When "the staff of Beauty"—our union to God—is broken, immediately "the staff of Bands"—the brotherhood between Judah and Israel—is cut asunder."* When he is gone, the uniting soul is gone, and the body dissolves. And of those who "separate themselves," it is said that they are "sensual, *having not the Spirit.*"† So that even if Christians were one to-day, they would be divided to-morrow, without the presence of the Divine Spirit. 2. The agency which shall unite the Church must be one which is able both to reach the *spirits* of men, and even to cope with that great spirit who is the leader and fomenter of all strife; so that no agency less powerful than that of the Divine Spirit *could* effect it. 3. Why is it that so vast a body as the faithful

* Zech. xi. † Jude 19.

have in all ages been united as they have—united on subjects on which all other men differ—why, but owing to this one cause, the presence among them of an all-pervading Spirit? leaving us to infer, that if ever this body becomes more united, it must be the result of the same agency—that as the Spirit is still like himself, however the Church may have become unlike itself, more of the same cause would produce more of the same effect. 4. Whenever this result is prefigured or promised in Scripture, it is represented as the direct result of a Divine influence. If bone came to his bone in the valley of vision, it was because the Spirit came, in answer to prayer, and breathed upon them. If the two sticks of Judah and Benjamin became one in the hand of the prophet, it was because the prophet himself was in the hand of God. And if believers shall "have one heart and one way," it will be because God will fulfil his promise to "give them." 5. Accordingly, the economy of the Gospel is emphatically the dispensation of the Spirit; whatever good may result to man, or whatever glory redound to God, from the instrumentality of the Gospel, is to be ascribed to the presence and agency of the Spirit. 6. Now one of the principal and primary objects of his presence in the Church is to unite its members in one. "For there is one body, and one Spirit;" and there is only one body, because there is but one Spirit. He first *converts* men to one way, that he may then *unite* them in one heart, in order to *exhibit and employ* them as one body, which he shall *animate and inhabit* as the one soul

of the whole. 7. So that to ask for an effusion of the Spirit, is to ask, in effect, for the union of the Church. Till bone had come to his bone in Ezekiel's vision, and the several parts of the body were united, *there was no breath in them* —in other words, the union of the body is essential to its life; and accordingly the Spirit animates only as he unites, and keeps united all whom he animates. 8. Whence it follows, that we are to seek the union of the Church not only *by* the Spirit, but *for* him. Union is not to be regarded as an *end;* but only as a means which *he* is to employ to a farther end. To expect the scriptural union of his Church without his agency; and to expect that he will effect a union for its own sake alone—a union which should supersede his presence, and render us independent of his aid, are both equally inconsistent and presumptuous. As the Spirit of light, he would illuminate and make our judgments one in the reception and belief of fundamental truth; as the Spirit of love, he would render a oneness in more than fundamental truth unnecessary; for having one Head we should have but one heart; and, then, as the Spirit of life, he would actuate the entire body of the faithful in one undivided effort for the glory of God, and speedily give the world to its instrumentality. 9. Now this Divine Spirit—the great principle of union and life in the Church—is promised unconditionally to prayer. "Ask, and ye shall receive."* We are assured that the effectual fervent prayer of

* Luke xi. 9, 13.

even one of the faithful availeth much; but, as if to induce them to assemble in numbers and *unite* in asking, our Lord promises to their *united* prayers what he does not promise to their separate and solitary requests. "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father who is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."* Here is a promise made expressly to the united prayer of even two or three, over and above the promises made to each of them when engaged in private devotion. Here is a power conferred on the united prayer of even two believers, greater than the amount of power and efficacy attaching to the prayers of the same two individuals in their single and solitary petitions. Here is the Great Head of the Church, who lost no opportunity of inculcating the union of his spiritual body, honoring the union of only two of his people in prayer, by investing it with an influence in heaven, greater than that which he promises to all his people praying separately. As if he had said, for instance, in anticipation of our present subject, "If you pray to unite, evince your sincerity by uniting to pray, and your prayer shall be granted. Having prayed apart and alone, you will be prepared to pray together, which is itself a blessing, an incipient union; and by praying together, though your number should be the lowest capable of being united, consisting of only two, the Divine Spirit

* Matt. xix. 19, 20.

shall descend to ratify and bless the union, and to make it the means of a still greater. But if such be the result of the union of only two or three, what would be the power of fifties, hundreds, or thousands? If my people came to pray for the spirit of union in companies, communities, and united denominations, the scenes of Pentecost should be repeated; soon should they all be one, as the Father is in me and I in Him; they should be one in us, and the world would believe that the Father had sent me."

Oh, if we valued union as Christ does, we should feel that the collected and united prayers of the whole Christian world would not be equal to the magnitude of the blessing, or to the ardor of our desires. If we knew the might of united prayer, we should pant to behold a convocation of all the churches of Christendom, in the persons of their ministers and representatives, prostrate in the fervor of believing and united supplication. If we knew how complacently God, from the throne of his glory, would look down on such a scene, or even on the least approximation to it—how emphatically the blessed Spirit is appointed to honor it before the eyes of the universe—how full the heavens are at this moment of his waiting influence—how inevitably the salvation of a ruined world would ensue—*could* we stand aloof from each other any longer? A voice would go forth from every section of the Christian community, saying, in anxious, brotherly, burning accents, "Come, and let us go *speedily* to pray before the Lord." The universal Church, like "the city of the Ephesians," in reference to "the great goddess

Diana," would become one "worshipper"—so completely would all their souls be turned into desire, and all that ardent desire, flow in one channel, for the gift of the great uniting Spirit. From such a scene, Christ could not be absent, There would he be in the midst of them. There would he be to breathe on them, and say, Receive ye the Holy Ghost. By one and the same act, *they* would receive the crowning gift of the Christian dispensation, and *he* the fulfilment of his final prayer—for they all would be one.

XI. In addition to all these means of promoting Christian union, or rather with a view of bringing them into operation, the apostle would enjoin it on *all ministers of the Gospel to look on themselves as the appointed peace-makers of the Christian Church.* Ecclesiastical history testifies, alas, how culpably they have, in this respect, forgotten the design of their office. "There are few schisms in the churches," says Flavel, "in which ministers have not had some hand. *Jerome*, on Hosea ix. 8, has these words, 'Searching the ancient histories, I can find none who have more rent the Church of God than those that sustain the office of ministers.'" One of Luther's habitual prayers was, "From vain-glorious doctors, contentious pastors, and unprofitable questions, good Lord deliver us." "Had the ministers of the Gospel," says Baxter in his Reformed Pastor, "been men of peace, and of catholic rather than factious spirits, the Church of Christ had not been in the case it now is. . . . . Commonly, it even brings a man under suspicion of

favoring some heresy, or abating his zeal, if he do but attempt a pacificatory work. As if there were no zeal necessary for the great fundamental verities of the Church, unity and peace, but only for parties, and some particular truths; . . . . . as if all zeal for peace proceeded from an abatement of our zeal for holiness; and as if holiness and peace were so fallen out, that there were no reconciling them: when yet it has been found, by long experience, that concord is a sure friend to piety, and piety always moves to concord; while, on the other hand, errors and heresies are bred by discord, as discord is bred and fed by them."

What, if the Levites, appointed to watch the Jewish temple night and day, had sacrilegiously set fire to the very building which their office required them to guard from the incendiary! Their flagrant conduct would only and fairly have represented the guilt of those who abuse the peaceful and guardian office they occupy in the Christian temple, into an opportunity for kindling strife and inflaming divisions. The Epistles of St. Paul to Timothy and Titus (analysed in our first section) show that it is the office of the ministry, partly, to warn the Church against divisions, to rebuke its self-willed and contentious troublers, and to soothe its feverish throbbings with the healing hand of love. They are, indeed, to maintain *the truth*; but they are to "maintain it *in love*"—(Eph. iv. 15)—an intimation to "the sacred order," says Doddridge, "that it was the design of the ministry to preserve *peace* and *charity*, as well as *orthodoxy*, *regularity*, and *discipline*, in the

Church;" an intimation, too, it might be added, that controversy itself should be so conducted as to win esteem instead of alienating it.

Some of the advocates of union, indeed, have proposed that societies should be formed, and lecturers be sent forth to disseminate scriptural information on the subject; a plan which might be executed with advantage. Archbishop Wake thought that the adoption of "a common church service" would shortly conduce to the union desired. And probably it would. But such a measure presupposes a degree of unanimity, which it should be the laborious endeavor of ministers to produce. Let them follow the example of the apostle Paul *in his ministry*—preaching "Christ crucified;" glorying in the Gospel as the ministry of reconciliation, an institution for restoring men to God, and to each other in him. Let them copy him in *his epistolary correspondence*—and what were his letters to the churches but proclamations of peace, inspired edicts from the throne of love; commanding believers, as they valued the favor of the King of saints, and hoped for a crown above, to "be kindly affectioned one towards another." Let them imitate him in his healing conduct towards those whose differences from each other were only circumstantial, by sending them together to gaze at the cross; by habitually exhibiting and exalting Christ before their eyes as their common centre, and their only hope. Why is it, a person might be ready to ask, on beginning to read the First Epistle to the Corinthians—why is it that the apostle repeats the

name of Christ so often? Not a sentence, but Christ is introduced by name—hardly a clause in which his name and even his titles do not recur, until we feel as if the apostle were writing principally for the sake of repeating that blessed name. Let him read on to the 12th verse, and he will discover that the *design* is to call off attention from names which divide—such as Paul, Apollos, and Cephas—by centering it on Him in whom these, and all other appellations, meet and merge—the Lord Jesus Christ. Let them go and do likewise; remembering that if little things occupy the attention of their people, it is only owing to the absence of great ones; that "our church" is a little thing compared with "our Lord," and "our denomination" a trifle compared with our common salvation;" that if those whom they address are saved, they will be saved not as denominationalists but as Christians, and not as members of a particular church, but as belonging to the Church universal. Let them follow him in his magnanimity towards his schismatic rivals; rejoicing that Christ is preached, though from inferior motives; offering to cooperate, and actually assisting, in every endeavor calculated to enlarge the kingdom of Christ; and, instead of eyeing the prosperity of other churches askance, while all heaven is rejoicing at it, sympathising in that prosperity, and thus making it their own. Let them imitate his prayers; wrestling with God, in private, for the peace and unity of his Church; deploring, in public, the existence of so many barriers to the free and general communion of the

Church; confessing its divisions as its scarlet sin; admonishing their people to pray for the impartation of the Holy Spirit as the only and infallible remedy; and taking every opportunity of associating with the ministers and members of other denominations in united prayer for a united Church; remembering that the great Intercessor above prays, not for a party, —that the names of *all* the tribes are engraven on his breast-plate, and that those prayers are likely to be the most successful which most nearly resemble his own. And let them copy the apostolic example, in often dwelling, themselves, on the final union of the whole Church, and in leading their people to the contemplation of the same august prospect. Let them do this, and they "shall be called the repairers of the breach, the restorers of paths to dwell in." Often let them lead their people to the lofty contemplation of that day, when that name shall be deemed by Christians the most appropriate which is most expressive of their common subjection to Christ, and their universal love to each other—when every party appellation shall be forgotten and lost in the great name of Christ—and when Judah and Ephraim shall be one. Oh, how natural would a spirit of conciliation become, after gazing on such a prospect! As if we had come down from a vision of heaven, from beholding those who while here differed from each other, all united and happy in each other's society there, our necessary concessions would appear so trifling that we should not feel them to be sacrifices—our union would at once begin.

CHAPTER XI.

MOTIVES AND ARGUMENTS TO UNION.

In proceeding to the enforcement of some of the most cogent reasons for Christian union, it might be proper to anticipate two inquiries, which might otherwise impair the desired impression. "Is the present a suitable season for bringing the question of union before the Church? And, have we any rational hope of promoting such union?"

1. In brief reply to the first inquiry, we remark, that as the obligation to Christian union is perpetual, the obligation of enforcing it is perpetual also; so that from the first moment of division in the Church to the final sounding of the trump of God, the inculcation of the duty can never be absolutely out of place—that if the present be a season of peculiar distraction in the Church, so much the more reason for laboring to restore it to its right mind—that as the darkest hour is commonly that which precedes the dawn, so it is historically true, that the gloomiest season of the Church has been generally that selected by God for saying to it, "Arise, and shine, for thy light is come"—that

we really know of no time having elapsed in the past, more suitable than the present, for the inculcation of union; since the subject, whenever raised, could scarcely have failed to awaken discussion on the party questions now in debate—that as to waiting for some more suitable period in the future,—as we have no right to expect that such time will ever arrive unless we employ the appropriate means, we are solemnly bound to do all we can to hasten it on—and, finally, that it is our sober and cheering conviction that, inflamed as is the state of party feeling in the Church at present, there is (and partly on that very account) as deep a conviction of the necessity of union, and as earnest and powerful a desire after it, in many a Christian bosom, as at any preceding period; that the number of such is increasing; and that a scriptural appeal on the subject is much more likely to affect the heart of the Christian now, with the torn and mangled state of the Church before his eyes, than as if we were deluding each other with the cry of "peace, peace, when there is no peace."

2. Admitting, however, that the present is as suitable as any other season, and in some respects even more so, for the introduction of our subject, "have we," it might be asked, "any rational hope of promoting the union of the Church?" To which we reply, that when we recall to mind the long-established reign of those prejudices by which Christians are divided—the almost uniform and total failure of the numerous, various, and strenuous endeavors which have been made to heal them—the

still prevailing disinclination to second such attempts—and the formidable obstacles which must be removed before a general union of Christians can be effected—we freely confess that were we to be sanguine of any thing like *speedy and general success* one moment, our fears, whether justifiable or not, would arise and rebuke us the next. On the other hand, we are not without grounds for expecting that a considerable *approximation* to Christian union is at hand. Such an approximation would be only in harmony with the spirit of the age, and with those various movements in society, which seem destined to be the means of temporally enlightening and improving the human race; and though the Church may only be indirectly affected by such an influence, still influenced it necessarily must be by the tendencies of that society in which it exists. The sword of persecution, too, sleeps in its scabbard; and the spirit of intolerance rarely ventures forth in the light of day. Our hopes, however, rest, under God, chiefly on influences of a purely religious nature. The growing diffusion of scriptural knowledge in the present day, cannot fail gradually to bring into question the existence of whatever is antiscriptural and antisocial in the Church. Those great benevolent and missionary enterprises, in which the best of every denomination are embarked in obedience to the will of their common Lord, make them feel increasingly the need of practical union and general co-operation; in order, both to make the most of their resources at home, and to avoid the fatal results of visible disunion and eventual

collision before the eyes of the heathen abroad. And, more and mightier than all, the prayer presented by the great Intercessor; and repeated by his followers in every subsequent age, "that they all might be one." As certainly as that prayer was offered, it will be answered; so that at this moment its accomplishment is nearer than at any preceding moment, and the next moment it will be nearer still. Every prayer of his people has been hastening it on; and, should the effect of the present appeal be to heighten the fervour of a portion of those who are already suppliants for the union of the Church, and to add but ten other suppliants to their number, we should confidently reply to the supposed inquiry, We believe that we have a strong and scriptural warrant for expecting the approaching union of the Church.

3. Our present appeal is made, be it remembered, not to the nominal religionists of the Christian community. We do not expect that those whose only attachment to religion is one of prejudice, will remain attached to it *in defiance* of prejudice. We are not so romantic as to imagine that the bigoted, whose loyalty to religion consists entirely in an obstinate defence of one or other of its out-works, should capitulate to the voice of reason, or even of Scripture itself; their "occupation would be gone"—their religion vanished—they would have nothing left in which to trust! We do not expect that the selfish will voluntarily construct a plan for the reduction of their own importance in the Church; especially if nothing

better than union is to ensue. We are not so ignorant of human nature as to expect that those to whom "gain is godliness," will place in the remotest degree of hazard their "means," their "living," "the main chance," for any thing so airy and intangible as Christian unity. So long as the "pavement" of the temple is "beaten gold," how can they be expected to lift their eyes even to the "vision beatific?" And as to the sensual and immoral, till they can forgive the Gospel for standing between them and their sins, we do not expect that they will forgive those who are aiming to conform to its requirements; and until they are united to Christ, we do not desire a closer union with them than that which arises from seeking their salvation.

4. Our appeal is made "to the faithful in Christ Jesus," of every community—to those who hope to be associated in heaven with all the "called, and faithful, and chosen;" and our entreaty is, that they will acknowledge and visibly unite with them in the Church on earth. We do not ask them to hate certain portions of the Church, to avoid them, to renounce all communion with them. Oh, had there been a requirement of this nature in the Bible, how hard would it have been considered by some, and how certain a proof that the whole Gospel was an imposture, by others;—but we ask them to love; we urge them to gratify the instinctive affection of their new nature; to augment their happiness a thousand fold, by opening the arms of their heart, and embracing all who are received by Christ. We ask them, not to *exclude*

any of the present objects of their Christian regard, but to *include* others; not to *demolish* their temple, but only, by removing "the middle wall of partition," to *enlarge* it; to renounce nothing of their denominational character but its unscriptural exclusiveness. We *do* ask them practically to admit, that "the supremacy of the Bible, and the right of private judgment," are words which have a meaning. We *do* ask that the Bible may be allowed to overrule and expel from among them that rival and impostor, Expediency—that they will consent to discuss the questions which divide the Church, on purely religious grounds—that they will regard the adherence of nominal Christians as a necessary source of weakness; so that, were all the nominalists in Christendom to desert their respective communities, and to attach themselves to any one denomination, that denomination (all other things being equal) would from that moment be shorn of its proper strength and utility, and become a mass of mere worldliness. We *do* ask that they will cease to treat the great principles which they hold in common as trifles, and to exalt trifles into the throne of great principles—that they will cease to think of conciliating the irreligious by any thing short of scriptural conversion; and that they all unite together in a godlike endeavor for that end—that they will remember that there is a principle of union existing between the pious churchman and the pious dissenter infinitely more intimate and binding than there is between either of these and the irreligious of their respective communities, that while the

bond which unites the one is accidental and temporary, that which unites the other is fastened by the hand of God himself, and fastened for eternity—that they will bear in mind that, as Christians, they belong properly to no one external communion, but that whatever they have or are in this capacity, they possess only in common with the entire body of the faithful—and that, in order to be brought into a scriptural state of union with this body, they absolutely need the impartation of the Holy Spirit, and should earnestly cry for his advent among them.

5. And now let Christians devoutly consider the grounds on which we ask this, and the reasons which bind them to comply—reasons so cogent that the least of them all is infinitely greater than the greatest, than *all* the reasons which can be adduced against it—reasons so many, and various, and diffused over so wide a space, that no single mind can collect and combine them—so affecting and weighty, that although the wisest and the holiest men have in all ages united to enforce them with tears and entreaties, and though some of these appeared even to have been continued on earth chiefly to enforce them, devoting their whole lives to the work, yet they never have, never can have, full justice done to them—reasons so sacred, that they have their seat in the bosom of God—so vast, that they measure with the universe—and so deeply laid in the Divine purposes, that the great object of the advent itself—the salvation of the world—is suspended on their taking effect.

I. Ought we not even to be *shamed* into the suppression of many of our factious proceedings, when we remember the associations which bind together multitudes of the irreligious? Shall *they* with all that is selfish and antisocial in their nature, live on a more friendly footing, and enjoy more unreserved intercourse with each other, than the children of the family of the God of peace?

II. Science, too, is loudly boasting of her catholicity. "Science, the partisan of no country, but the beneficent patroness of all, has liberally opened a temple where all may meet. She never inquires about the country or sect of those who seek admission. The philosopher of one country should not see an enemy in the philosopher of another. He should take his seat in the temple of science, and ask not who sits beside him." Such is the language of science; while that of the Church is almost entirely the reverse. It is true that science does not descend into the heart as religion does; appeals not to our great interests and responsibilities; and, consequently, leaves the depth and mass of our moral nature unmoved. But if, on this account, it does not contain the same occasions for disunion among its followers, neither does it furnish the same reasons for union. Their goddess and temple are mere abstractions; our God is the only Absolute Existence in the universe: their knowledge and pursuits are bounded by time; ours are *from* heaven, and *for* it, and are commensurate with eternity. And shall *they* have to set us an example of peace? Shall "the

disputers of this world," rebuke, by their unity, the followers of the Prince of Peace? They ought to find peace in the Church, when they are distracted by the cares, and dissatisfied with the emptiness of the world: shall they be driven from the Church to find calm and enjoyment in the world?

III. Even the political quiet of the country* is disturbed by the broils of Christians. Great civil interests are neglected, the organisation of a system of national education is delayed, the movements of the Legislature thwarted and thrown into confusion, and important questions of humanity and good government are compelled to wait, till the intended peacemakers of the world have adjusted their own quarrels, and agreed among themselves.

IV. And this reminds us of the *scriptural* reasons for our union. What was the design of the whole Gospel economy? The angels who heralded the advent of its Divine Founder, announced that *its object was peace on earth, and good-will towards men.* The divisions of his followers, however, seem to intimate, that Christianity possesses the strange and questionable virtue of attracting all classes to itself, and of repelling them all from each other—that it converts all the enmity which they once felt against God, into hostility against each other—that those who were meant to be the peacemakers of the world, so far from fulfilling their office, have not yet been able to settle the preliminaries of even a truce among themselves,

* England, be it remembered. Ed.

but are among the principal disturbers of society. And thus it is that our mutual contentions are actually placing in hazard the character and design of the Christian dispensation.

V. But *during the early ages of Christianity, the Church visibly and really maintained its intended unity;* and ought not this consideration to exercise a healing influence on Christians of the present day? With a thousand reasons for division of which we happily know nothing, the first Christians were one. The petty bickering which occasionally disturbed the peace of a particular society, did not affect the union of the general Church. "They who are at Rome," said the Bishop of Cæsarea in a letter to Cyprian, "do not entirely observe all things which have been handed down from the beginning..... So, likewise, in a very great number of other provinces, many things vary according to the diversity of place and people; but, nevertheless, their variations have at no time infringed the peace and unity of the catholic Church." Converging from the most opposite points, Christians met together at the cross, and the principle which drew them to that, bound them also to each other. And shall that example exist for us in vain? Shall we tempt the world to infer that the Gospel exhausted its benevolent power in its first efforts? that its uniting influence is irrecoverably lost? Of this we may be assured, that until we practically regard the unity of the primitive Church as obligatory on ourselves, its history exists only to aggravate our guilt and to increase our condemnation.

VI. *Every inspired injunction of mutual forbearance among Christians, is a scriptural argument for the unity of the Church.* When the apostle interfered to compose the differences in the church at Rome, though he admitted that they implied the existence of erroneous views, he not only did not enjoin the expulsion of the erring, he did not even peremptorily pronounce on which side the charge of error lay, but attempted to effect a reconciliation while each retained his peculiar tenets. And the ground on which he rests the obligation of each party to exercise forbearance with the other is, "for God hath received him."* "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also hath received us to the glory of God."† Here, then, is an apostolic canon for the regulation of the conduct of such Christians as fundamentally agree, while they differ on points of subordinate importance—a canon which imperatively requires them to exercise a reciprocal toleration and indulgence—to give each other credit for a conscientious difference to the will of Christ—to view each other as mutually received of God—and all this that they may on no account proceed to an open rupture. So that all the parties which at present divide the Church, owing to diversities of opinion which are not inconsistent with salvation, exist in open violation of this sacred canon, impeach the inspired wisdom which

* Rom. xiv. 3. † Rom. xv. 1—7.

enjoins it, and repeal all those commands of mutual toleration which harmonise with its spirit. Oh, how should it humble those parties to reflect, that were they to pass an act of oblivion for all the alienations and feuds of the past, mutually to concede the points at issue, and forthwith to embrace and become one—vast as the sacrifices would appear in their own eyes, and great as the event would certainly be in its happy results—it would after all be only and simply an exercise of Christian forbearance, an act of obedience to the heavenly voice which says, "forbear." And shall they who are commanded even to *love* their enemies, show that they have not Christianity enough to *bear* with their friends? Shall they whose religion requires them to pray *for* their deadly persecutors, show that they have not religion enough to pray *with* their brethren of another name? Is this to "forbear one another in love?"

VII. Let Christians remember that *Christ commands their unity.* And the unity he enjoins is that which is cemented by love; so that mutual forbearance itself is to be exercised, not reluctantly, but as the result and expression of Christian affection. "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." He will not accept that as love to the brethren, which consists only of love to a party. The affection which he demands is that which embraces Christians as Christians, and therefore all Christians—which loves on a universal reason. He will not accept that as love to the brethren which merely tolerates

their existence—which simply gives them *leave to be*—which allows them to worship God only on the stern condition that they remove to a distance, and remain apart from us. Surely we cannot suppose that such a state of mind could ever justify us in saying, "We know that we have passed from death unto life:" and yet the state of mind which believers are mutually to cherish would justify them in saying *that*, for it would furnish a scriptural proof of their being in a state of salvation. It is not possible that love of any kind should confine itself to mere negative expressions—to bare abstinence from the infliction of injury—least of all the fraternal love which Christ requires in his people. It "suffereth long, and is kind, and never faileth;" for its exemplar is the ever-active and all-fruitful love of Christ to themselves.

To render this exercise of love still more obligatory, our Lord inculcates it as the principal mark by which his followers are to be distinguished in every age; as the chief evidence of our being in a state of union with himself; as furnishing to the world a convincing proof of the divinity of the Gospel; and as the all-pervading principle which alone can prevent a "schism in the body." That it might have a pattern which should move as well as teach, our Lord proposes himself—"*as I* have loved you, that ye also love one another;" intimating, at once, how rich their fraternal love should be in its fruits, and how ample in its embrace, for his love is extended indiscriminately to every member of his spiritual body. And to render

the command irresistible, he waits till the cross is in view before he utters it—urges it as his last request—repeats it as peculiarly the law of Calvary—as if he would make it impossible for them ever to revisit the hallowed scene without hearing it issue from the cross afresh; or ever to meet around his table without feeling themselves bound to pledge each other anew to mutual love, over the sacred symbols of his love to them. Oh, if Christians did but remember that they cannot turn away from each other, without turning away from their dying Lord; without rudely violating the only new command which his lips of love ever uttered; without sullenly disregarding a request which came forth with his blood, with what mutual concessions would they approach each other and embrace. "Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

VIII. And how powerfully should the love of the brotherhood be enforced by the consideration that *their union is indissoluble.* Those who are constituted brethren by virtue of their relation to Christ, *will, and must,* be brethren *forever.* Cold and formal towards each other they may be, suspicious and distant they may be, but, in spite of all, the principle of brotherhood continues, and will continue forever. Nothing which they can themselves do to effect a separation—no process which can be adopted by their enemies—can ever annihilate their fraternity to others, or the fraternity of others to them. The vital ligature which unites them to God, is that which also unites them to each other; and as there is "nothing which shall be

able to separate us from" the one, our connexion with the other is indissoluble. What true sublimity does this fact of essential perpetuity impart to the relationship of the Christian family! How lamentably are their existing divisions at variance with it! How impossible would it be for them to become duly alive to it without consenting to merge those differences —without approximating to the spirit of that blessed religion where love is a divine reality, and the brotherhood is complete!

IX. The fellowship of Christian denominations should be cultivated from the consideration that *the wisest and the best of each have most earnestly desired it, and that now they are perfectly one in the Church above.* Many of them (men, of whom the world was not worthy) have left their desire on record—a fact which will be adduced in evidence against the troublers of the Church in the day of final account. Some of them died with the desire on their lips; they could not bequeath a legacy of peace to the Church as their dying Lord did, but they approached his example as nearly as they were able, by earnestly *desiring* it for those they left behind. Some of them who had contended too eagerly concerning minor points, saw and acknowledged their error even on this side death. How admirable the letter in which Ridley, writing to Hooper—when both of them were prisoners for Christ—laments their "little jarring in time past about the by-matters and circumstances of religion," but assures him that, "with his whole heart, in the bowels of Christ, he loves him for the truth's sake, which abideth in

us." And can we suppose that in heaven they are conscious of any regret on the subject of their agreement, except that it was not made earlier? "If the ruptures of the Church might be composed," says Chillingworth, "I do heartily wish that the cement were made of my dearest blood."

"I confess," writes Owen, "I would rather, much rather, spend all my time and days in making up and healing the breaches and schisms that are amongst Christians, than one hour in justifying our divisions, even therein, wherein on the one side they are capable of a just defence." "Far more comfort were it for us," writes Hooker, in his "Ecclesiastical Polity," "to labor under the same yoke as men who look for the same eternal reward of their labors; to be enjoined with you in bonds of indissoluble love and unity; to live as if, our persons being many, our souls were but one, rather than in such dismembered sort to spend our few and wretched days in a tedious prosecuting of wearisome contentions, the end whereof, if they have not some speedy end, will be heavy on both sides." How solemn the adjuration of Bishop Hall, when preaching before the Synod of Dordt —"We are one body, let us also be of one mind. By that tremendous name of the Almighty God . . . . . by your own souls— by the most holy compassions of Jesus Christ our Saviour, aim at peace, brethren; enter into peace; that laying aside all prejudice, party spirit, and evil affections, we may all come to a happy agreement in the same truth." "It has long been my grief, as well as my wonder,"

writes Boyle, "to see such comparatively petty differences in judgment make such wide breaches and vast divisions in affection." "I," exclaimed Baxter, in the golden sentence we have already quoted, "I can as willingly be a martyr for LOVE as for any article of the creed." And such is the spirit breathed in the writings of a Wesley,* a Whitefield,† and indeed of all the most distinguished "fathers of the modern churches."

And can we suppose that they who were the mediators and healing spirits of their day, have any thing to regret, except that they were not *more* in earnest? Oh, could we take our differences into their presence—could we convoke and consult a synod of the blessed—how certainly should we behold those whose disciples and descendents have been ever at variance here, sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; how earnestly would they unite in admonishing those followers, if they honor their memory, and would enhance their happiness, to blot from their writings the controversial and contentious page in which once they gloried—to merge *their* names at once and forever in the great Christian name—and to emulate the *union* of heaven, if they would obtain an antepast of its joys! "Let us but imagine what their blessed spirits now feel at the retrospect of their earthly frailties, and can we do other than strive to feel as they now feel, not as they once felt? So will it be with the disputes

* See his Sermon on a Catholic Spirit.
† See his Letter to the Religious Societies.

between good men of the present day! and if you have no other reason to doubt your opponent's goodness than the little point in dispute, think of Baxter and Hammond, of Milton and Taylor, and let it be no reason at all."*

X. But if the union of the Church militant would be thus agreeable to the Church triumphant, *how much more agreeable would it be to the nature of Him who is the Author of both —the Blessed God!* He is "*the very God* of peace." Whatever the glorified above, or the redeemed on earth, may know of peace, they know only as recipients and instruments; but He is its *very God.* He is the fountain whence all the streams of peace which are at this moment circulating through the universe, immediately flow. And his Church was intended, under Christ, to be the channel of peace to this troubled world. How agreeable, then, would it be to his exalted nature to see his Church answering its high design; no longer reflecting from its bosom the tempestuous and angry sky of earthly strife, but the calm of a higher region —giving back to heaven its own image, and presenting to earth the means of becoming like it.

XI. How agreeable would it be *to Him who has selected as one of his most appropriate titles, "the Prince of Peace!"* who chose that the peacemakers should be called, more emphatically than others, the children of God—leaving us to infer that they more nearly resemble their Heavenly Father; who bequeathed to his

* Coleridge.

Church a legacy of peace; who prayed in death that his followers might be one; and who would still be invoked by them "as the Lord of peace himself." As "the head of his body the Church," he feels the shock and suffering of all that is inflicted on the members; and not the less that the hand which inflicts it is its own. How congenial would it be to his gracious nature to see that his people were no longer crucifying him afresh, and putting him to an open shame—that they were no longer losing sight of his cross in a fierce contention about his seamless robe—no longer forgetting his atoning blood in their thirst for the blood of each other—but that they were all looking upon him who had been thus wounded in the house of his friends, were mingling their tears and supplications together, and then, emulating the winged zeal of the angels at his advent, were going into all the world, preaching, "peace on earth, good-will towards men!"

XII. How agreeable would *the restoration of unity be to that Divine Agent who is given to the Church as the Spirit of love, joy, and peace!* "There is but one body and one Spirit, a Spirit that spreads vital influence through the body. What can we think of that Spirit that feels every where? that is in the body a universal sentient? How can that Spirit but be grieved? How should any of us like it, to have our living body torn limb from limb, and part from part! Though with him passion and disturbance can have no place, intellectual resentment is infinitely greater and deeper than we

can either feel or conceive."* But in the same sense and degree in which the dissevered and distracted state of the Church now grieves him, the restoration of its unity and peace would yield him ineffable delight. The very *desire* of such restoration sincerely and generally expressed would open the windows of heaven, and cause him to return. If even a good man is conscious of pure satisfaction in only *attempting* a family reconciliation, how inconceivable would be the satisfaction of the Divine Spirit in restoring and ratifying the peace of the great family of God! What benevolent spirit in heaven would not find an additional heaven in being despatched even to assist in such an office! Who, then, shall attempt to describe the satisfaction of Him to whom the office belongs, and to whom it belongs, because it is congenial and proper to his nature? In restoring the torn members of the Church to each other, and healing its wounds, he would be only gratifying his own nature. And having prepared the body, he would be able to return to his appropriate office of being the life of that body, and through it, the glorifier of Jesus in the conversion of the world.

XIII. But if the unity of the Church would be thus agreeable to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, *let us consider its eminent fitness and consequent agreeableness to the blessed Trinity in Unity.* Of this we are reminded by our Lord himself in his intercessory prayer—"that they all might be one, as thou

* Howe.

Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also might be one in us." Of the Divine subsistencies in the Trinity the Church knows nothing scripturally, but as they subsist in the unity of the Godhead, acting together in the economy of our salvation. And of all the partakers of that salvation, the world ought to have known nothing practically, but as they were seen together in the unity of the Church, acting together for the conversion of the world. How suitable is it that those who have to ascribe their salvation to a plan in which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have united their infinite perfections, and who have been all baptised into their one sacred name, should themselves unite in a community of love and duty in return—that the members of each Christian church, feeling the penury of their utmost love, should call on the members of every other church to unite with them, and thus multiply their means of glorifying the Triune God! And how supremely agreeable to the Blessed Trinity, looking down from the throne of their infinite glory, to behold the image of their own ineffable union reflected in the intimate and indissoluble oneness of the Church; and the Church contending only which part of it shall be most instrumental in going into all the world, preaching the Gospel to every creature, and baptising them into the threefold name of God!

XIV. A tender appeal for the unity of the Church is derivable from the fact that *it owes its existence entirely to infinite love.* If, like many an earthly kingdom and institution, it had originated in strife, in strife it might have been

maintained; but it is the pure creation of Love. If it be true that in God we live, and move, and have our being—if, *as men*, we inhabit his infinite essence, it is true that, *as Christians*, we inhabit his very heart, dwell in his love. It is to this fact the apostle alludes when he would have us to comprehend with all saints the fourfold dimensions of the love of God. Material substances have only three dimensions; but the Church, having for its temple the heart of God, is to search for the circumference in all directions round, and be lost in the love which passeth knowledge. Christians, the Church is the institution of love; shall we make it the scene of hatred? It stands in the heart of God; shall we fill it with malevolence? What should we have thought of the disciples, had they audibly quarrelled on Calvary, and in the hearing of their dying Lord? And yet all our contentions are conducted in the presence of the love which led him there! Is not this crucifying him afresh?

XV. The union of Christians would be not only eminently agreeable to the Author of their salvation, and in accordance with what they owe to his love, *it would be supremely advantageous to themselves.* How necessarily would it *tend to harmonise our views on those points which are now the sources of division!* Is not this the gracious way in which God seeks to terminate our guilty quarrel with himself? Instead of moving off from us to the greatest possible distance, has he not come nearer to us than ever, dwelt amongst us, established *a ministry of reconciliation*, and invited us to "come

and reason" with him at a throne of grace? And by pursuing this gracious course towards us, is he not intentionally showing us the right way of becoming reconciled to each other? and would he not honor and bless the imitation of his own methods?

The spirit of conciliation which would then prevail would of itself do more towards the adjustment of disputed points than all the treatises which they have ever called forth. Suspicion would be painful to us; and crimination laborious and hateful; we should refrain from it not only because required by God to do so, but also by a prohibition and law of our Christian nature. Mutual explanation alone, fraternally sought, and promptly, patiently, and kindly given, would obviate many a difficulty, and prove many an objection, now deemed insuperable, to have been quite unfounded. The simplest means of conciliation would then become means of grace, for God would bless them. In the presence of the great objects which would engage our attention, many of the points at issue now would at once be eclipsed and forever lost sight of. While the Spirit of God, descending into the clear and serene atmosphere which would then fill the Church, would either, as the Spirit of Truth, lead us into all truth respecting the few points that remained, or else, as the Spirit of Love, would render such illumination unnecessary. Thus union would produce unanimity, and unanimity, by reaction, promote union.

XVI. It would greatly *promote the piety of the Church.* Hence the prayer of St. Paul for

the Thessalonians—"The Lord make you increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men: *to the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God.*" Having put away the childish things—the toys and trifles which now engage our attention, and occasion our disputes—"we should feel with much greater influence than ever the force of high motives; we should be thrown directly upon all that is vast, ennobling, and pure, in the objects of our faith:" we should view the whole path of duty as from heaven. Breath, now wasted in controversy, would be turned into the incense of prayer. Christian intercourse would then be, what it always should have been, a religious ordinance—an exercise of mutual benevolence—a channel of grace. And the only spirit invoked in the Church would be the Spirit of grace.

XVII. In a variety of ways, the union of Christians would greatly *increase their capacity for usefulness.* "Union is strength." When it was once demanded of Agesilaus why Lacedæmon had no walls, he replied, "The concord of the citizens is its strength." And as a city or a kingdom becomes powerful in proportion as its parts act in concert, so would it be with the Christian Church. Talent, which is consuming itself in the flames of angry controversy, would then be sanctified, and set at liberty, for a holier office. Zeal would come from one part of the Church, to be directed by Wisdom from another part. Preaching, where it is now, in consequence of the withering influence of dissension, productive of comparatively little good,

would then, by being devoted intensely to the exhibition of Christ crucified, be attended with Pentecostal success. Churches which have now to complain of weakness and worldliness, would then, by copying the visible unanimity and concentrated zeal of the primitive saints, be crowned with primitive triumph, and be more than a match for hostile myriads. Resources, which, divided, are not equal to the religious cultivation of a country, would, when united, be equal to an attempt on a continent. And, having made the attempt, instead of fearing in every Christian stranger that approached our sphere of labor, an agent from a rival church deputed to supplant us, we should hail him, from whatever section of the Church he might have come, as a brother beloved, and as a reinforcement of our spiritual strength.

XVIII. Christians would be *inspired with a sacred fortitude and courage.* The desertion or mutiny of part of an army, disheartens all the rest. And Christians, "unless united, signify but as so many single persons; each one caring and contriving only how to shift for himself. Love makes them significant to one another. Every one understands himself to be the common care of all the rest." The conviction that they cannot fail without grieving those whom they love and who love them, would keep them from the thought of declining; and the assurance, that in every enterprise of benevolence they carried with them the sympathies and prayers of the Church, would put them on deeds of heroism in the cause of God, which would call forth the applauses of all heaven.

XIX. But especially would union increase their capacity for usefulness, *by increasing their capacity for the reception and operation of that Holy Spirit who alone can crown their activity with success.* In order that the slain in the valley of vision might become an efficient body, it was necessary, not only that life should enter into each separately, they must fall into order with a view to the union and organisation of the whole—and, *then*, as "an exceeding great army," a skilful commander alone was wanting to lead them forth to conquest. The Leader of the hosts of God is already waiting. Let them not only be compact in their several sections, but let those sections be united with each other, and as one body, he will lead them forth "terrible as an army with banners." Nothing shall be too great for them to attempt; and every conflict shall be a victory.

XX. How loudly is such a union called for by the fact that, though at present they refuse to co-operate, God is graciously commending them to each other, *by employing them all, as far as their divisions permit, and, according to the amount of their piety and zeal, impartially blessing them all.* Where is the denomination which engrosses all religious excellence to itself? or which pretends to a monopoly of the Divine favor? Where is the Christian Church which has not been the means of saving some souls from death? Shall we ascribe this, as the Jews maliciously ascribed the miracles of Christ, to Satanic agency? If not, there is no alternative left us but to ascribe it to God. And shall we cast from our presence those whom

God is distinguishing with *his* favor? In honoring their instrumentality, he is answering their prayers, and sending them from his throne with his blessing; and shall we meet them on the way, and "curse whom the Lord hath blessed?" Shall we meet them as they descend from the mount, and look angrily on those on whom God has been smiling? Shall we admit that every instance of their usefulness is an attestation, under the great seal of Heaven, that they are his servants—an "epistle of commendation" to our hearts; and shall we yet close our hearts against them, and thus affront the Being whose signature they bring? Let us be assured that the Lord whom they serve is saying to them, as he did to his first disciples, "He that despiseth you, despiseth me." As we would not despise the Lord that bought us, then, let us recognise the usefulness of all whom he employs: and, by co-operating with them, let us seek to augment that usefulness, and to participate in its joys.

XXI. Such a union *could not fail to strike the world with awe.* Whether it was announced by any public manifesto from the united churches or not, so remarkable an event would necessarily attract general attention. That Christians should have consented to hold their differences in abeyance, that they should have agreed to sacrifice their particular predilections, and that they should have done this solely to facilitate the progress of the Gospel—this would evince so unquestionable a zeal for the conversion of the world, that cavillers would be confounded, the prejudiced conciliated, and the general heart

be impressed. Only let the proclamation go forth, "Christians are one"—the "gates of hell" would tremble at the sound; and more honor would accrue to the Gospel than it has received from the Church since the days of the martyrs.*

XXII. But not merely would it arrest the public eye, *it would assail and affect the public heart.* The world would not long be left at leisure to speculate and wonder. Men would find that the Church had united for an object—that that object was themselves—that they were assailed on all sides by the combined and omnipotent forces of love. The Spirit himself would be the leader of the Christian host; his sword, the weapon they employed; his inspiration animating them to the fight; and his power crowning them with success. Scenes of apostolic triumph would be witnessed again. Jesus would see of the travail of his soul and be satisfied; for men, convinced that such a union of disinterested love in a selfish world could only be resolved into a heavenly cause, and breathed upon by the great renewing Spirit, would at length believe that God had sent him, and would gratefully capitulate to his offered grace.

XXIII. From all this would necessarily result *a vast enhancement of our happiness.* Happy, indeed, we may now be comparatively in the favor of God; but how much happier should we then be in the superadded favor of all his people; for in their sympathy we should find

* This view is powerfully enforced in the New Model of Christian Missions.

the reflection of his smiles, and an additional channel in which his love might flow. "Oh, what cheerfulness, strength, and pleasure, did the primitive Christians reap from the unity of their hearts in the way and worship of God! Next to the delight of immediate communion with God himself, none like that which arises from the harmonious exercise of the graces of the saints in their mutual duties and communion one with another. How are their spirits dilated and refreshed by it! What a lively emblem is there of heaven! the courts of princes afford no such delights."* To the joys of internal communion would be added those of external triumph. Our joy would be the joy of harvest—a harvest of immortal souls gathered in to Christ; the joy of angels over one repenting sinner, multiplied by the numbers which would then be added unto the Lord daily; the joy of Christ himself, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame—for in his satisfaction and glory we should find our own. Of such a Church God himself would not be ashamed. Answering, as it would, his Divine intention, he would pronounce it good. He would rejoice over it with singing. In the light of his countenance would begin its millennial day. Nothing that could add to its prosperity would be withheld. No gift that could enrich it, no honor that could distinguish it in the eyes of the world, would be deemed too costly to confer. "A great voice out of heaven would be heard, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell among them."

* Flavel.

XXIV. And is it of all this that our divisions are depriving us? They are depriving us of more—*of all that happiness which the fruits of our union would produce in the final judgment and in eternity.* According to St. Paul, in the fourteenth chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, the subject of our present divisions is to come under examination at the judgment-seat of Christ. *Now* we are presuming to judge each other, *then* he will sit in judgment on us all. We shall find ourselves associated then with many of those whom we now condemn. And will it detract nothing from our bliss to remember that on earth we refused them our communion, avoided them, contributed nothing whatever towards the acquisition of that spiritual excellence in which they will then eclipse the sun? We are to suppose, not only that believers individually, but that entire churches will reap the result of their collective usefulness, in an award of collective happiness. And will it detract nothing from *our* felicity to remember that we knew little of collective usefulness? to see that the additional crown which we should have won as co-workers, as party-workers we have lost? According to the same apostle, when writing to the Thessalonians, in the passage we have before cited, the union of Christians now will be a great augmentation of their happiness then. He prayed for that union, "to the end their hearts may be established in holiness before God, even our Father, *at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.*" Now when he shall so "come to be glorified in his saints," one of the facts relating

to them which will redound to his glory will be, that he should have made them all one in himself. But if their union *then* will add lustre to his glory, will it add nothing to the happiness of those among them who shall be able to remember that they honored him in the same way here upon earth? That they here presented to the world the heavenly spectacle of a united Church? On the other hand, will it detract nothing from *our* joy to remember that we had to die before we would unite with more than a party? that we left the Church as divided as we found it? and that our departure was actually the departure of an obstacle to union?

And are our divisions thus casting their shadows forwards into eternity? Are they not only impairing our happiness and usefulness now, but even threatening to dim the lustre of the crown which shall be assigned us then? And for *what?* Who is to be the gainer? What is the compensation? When is it to accrue? Assemble the Church, and inquire. Surely, if an advantage is ever to result, it must by this time have appeared. Fifteen hundred years have been allowed the Church to try the merits of division. Summon the various parties, and learn what these merits are. Alas! some of them are embroiled too deeply to heed the call. And of those that do, some refuse to approach lest they should be contaminated by the touch of another denomination; while the rest, estranged from each other, exhibit signs of mutual jealousy and distrust. And is this the religion of love, in praise of whose fraternal and sympathetic spirit inspiration prepared its

loftiest strains? How has its gracious spirit evaporated! and whither has it fled? Are these the descendants and representatives of the men who were so rich in their affections, and lavish of their all for Christ, that hostility itself was often disarmed, and their enemies turned into admiring friends! Is this the Church which was to be made transparent by the enshrined glory, to repel the presumptuous approach, to invite admiration, and to find in its unearthly excellence its lustre and defence? Alas, its divisions have made it the scorn of the world; have often proceeded to such extremities that the world itself, after looking on awhile in derision, has at length interfered in pity to part the combatants. Is this the Church which was to advance like a bannered host, carrying with her the sympathies of the groaning creation, gathering up trophies at every step, and returning at length from the circuit and conquest of the world, laden with many crowns for him who had caused her to triumph in every place? Alas, how often, and to what a wide extent has she herself been worsted—worsted and disgraced, till Imposture has dared to threaten her with extinction—Popery has caricatured her likeness and successfully passes in her stead—Infidelity points at her "the slow unmoving finger" of scorn—and no form of error, no system of deception, deems itself too impotent to contend with her, too mean to vie with her, or too insignificant to be accepted in her stead! Is this the body which was to be made one by the inhabiting and all-pervading Spirit; and of whose unity the most intimate and compacted

objects in creation were considered the most appropriate emblems? Alas, the body is so dislocated, dismembered, and mangled, and the *dijecta membra* so scattered, that it has become another vision of dry bones; and another resurrection which shall bring bone to his bone is alone adequate to its condition! And was it for this that Divinity and humanity met in the person of the Son of God? Was it for this he bowed his head upon the cross, and died to show that God is Love? Was it for this he instituted a Church, prayed for its unity, endowed it with his Spirit, and gave to it the field of the world for the scene of its triumphs? Our hearts *feel* that it was not. The sighs of numbers mourning in secret over the blighted peace, the prostrate energy, the humbled honor of the Church, assure us that it was not. All the unreclaimed, neglected, perishing portions of the world, protest that it was not. Shame—equal shame—on the Jews who crucified the Son of God, and on Christians who, in the person of his members, have for ages been crucifying him afresh, and are still putting him to an open shame. Blessed Saviour, we need that thou shouldest add to the prayer for the unity of thy disciples the prayer for thy murderers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Well might the apostle so passionately *beseech* the members of the Corinthian church, *by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*, to heal their divisions. Supposing he foresaw only a thousandth part of the evils which would spring from schism, well might he *endure an agony* of solicitude for the peace of the church at Co-

losse! Would an entreaty less pathetic, or a concern less profound, have been suited to the magnitude of the occasion? Where, then, is the energy of appeal, and the anguish of concern, which would be equal to the divisions of the Church now? Christian, there is not an object in the wide creation, which does not sympathise in solicitude for our peace—there is not a holy intelligence in the universe, which does not join in an entreaty, urging us, *for Christ's sake*, to unite. They are all interested in it:—from Him who sits on the throne, "expecting till his enemies are made his footstool," and waiting for his followers to unite for that end, through all ranks of holy existences round about his throne, and down through every class of this lower creation groaning and waiting to be delivered—all, have a momentous stake in the union of the Church, and entreat us, *for Christ's sake*, to be one.

Christian, you are not insensible to sights of sorrow and suffering: you could not look on a lacerated, bleeding, human being, without shuddering in sympathy. See, then, that marred but majestic spectacle of suffering! it is the mangled form of Divine Christianity—her garments rent—her sacred person wounded—and life streaming out at every wound; and, as she turns on us a mournful and imploring aspect, a voice from each of those wounds entreats us to unite. Shall we staunch them? or shall our answer to her entreaty be the infliction of yet more wounds? Before she quits our presence, a voice from afar comes pealing on our ear—the cry of the victims of superstition seeking

ease of mind in self-inflicted tortures of body—of the conscience-stricken idolater eagerly inquiring if there be a Saviour from despair—of the dying on the shores of eternity asking, but asking in vain, concerning the dark unknown before them—all, combining and beseeching us to unite and hasten to their relief. In aid of their entreaty, comes a voice from the past—not merely from the depths of dungeons which Bigotry has built, from flames which she has kindled, and from the ruins of Christian temples she has laid waste—a sound of more solemn and appalling import—the voice of the myriads who, through the divisions and consequent neglect of the Church, have gone down to final destruction, entreating us to unite and send unto their brethren lest they also come into the place of torment. And shall all these entreaties come to us in vain? But above and beyond them all, a voice may be heard, whose every accent should thrill through the universal Church—the voice of the great Intercessor within the vail, still praying, still pleading, "that they all may be one." And shall he pray thus *alone?* Will not his people join him? Shall not church after church unite in the prayer till the entire body of believers have joined him? till the burden of the church above has become the burden of the Church below? Oh! happy day for the earth—the first of the millennium. And happy day for heaven—the first of a millennium there; for the union of Christians on earth would be the glory of the blessed above.

Christian, you can assist to hasten it on.

From this day your duty is clear, definite, imperative—you are to become an agent and an element of Christian unity. Is the Church divided? resolve, in the strength of God, that, as far as you are concerned, it shall not remain so—that, if it do, it shall not be your fault.

Is the subject of Christian union very generally misunderstood, disregarded, and unfelt? explain, recommend, and enforce it in every scriptural way; put into circulation every tract, pamphlet, and book likely to advance its claims; show especially that the Bible is full of it from beginning to end. Is an impartial endeavor at union likely to incur, as it ever has done, the obloquy of the partial and the prejudiced of all parties? welcome the reproach, "count it all honor," and behold in it an additional incentive to persevere. Are there certain obstructions, the removal of which you deem an indispensable prerequisite to union? Let the spirit and manner in which you seek to remove them demonstrate that you seek it, not for its own sake, but for the sake of union—and that you aim even at union, not for its own sake, but for the sake of that great object with which the divided Church is still trifling—the conversion of the world. Is it true, that there are some to be found in every community of the faithful who long for the visible fellowship of the whole? claim kindred with them, and take them to your heart; co-operate with them in the same society, and for a common object; and see if there be not some scheme of Christian beneficence yet untried around which all may rally, and in which all may unite. Is it true, that the young

are less influenced by the spirit of party than those who have long mingled in its strifes? Betake yourself to *them;* imbue them with the spirit, and claim them for the cause, of Christian union, before schism shall have seized and sworn them into the service of party. Show them the prospect which awaits the earth in the sublime spectacle of a united Church; take them to the mount of vision where they can behold it;—"from the tops of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him; how goodly are thy tents, O Jacob, and thy tabernacles O Israel!"—urge them to live—to die, if necessary—in order to turn that vision into reality. Is Christ interceding for the oneness of his body, the Church? Resolve that you will daily join him in the entreaty. Is his Spirit grieved at its dissensions, yet waiting to return? Confess its guilt, deprecate his displeasure, and invoke an effusion of his healing influence.

Are souls ruined, is the world perishing, through its divisions? Yes, and on it will go for a time, trying to save them by its divided efforts—laboring to succeed without uniting. But no, never; the plan is fixed by Him who changeth not—the unity of the Church *must* precede the salvation of the world. Publish this truth abroad; be assured that those Christians who differ most, are all one on this subject—they all desire to save their fellow-men. So that never can you insist on this ground for union, without touching a chord which vibrates through all their hearts alike. Resolve, therefore, to keep this motive to union in view yourself, and to insist on it with others—that the

visible unity of Christians *must* precede the conversion of the world, and is the appointed means by which it is to be effected. They are all believers in your blessed Lord, and glory in his image. Resolve, then, that their people shall be your people, since their God is your God. Their eventual union, remember, is absolutely certain; and, oh, the glorious results of that union, what tongue can tell? A triumphant Church—a converted world—a glorified Redeemer—a rejoicing universe. But eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive its blessed effects. Covet to witness it. Pourtray its splendors to your mind; and enjoy it, in anticipation, daily. Let it be the joy set before *you*, as it was, and is, before your Divine Redeemer; and you will account no labor too great, no sacrifice too costly, that can accelerate its arrival, even by a moment. And remember, also, that a united Church awaits your arrival in heaven. Every element there tends to unite. Act now, as you will wish, ten thousand ages hence, you had acted; and from this day you will seek to heal the divisions of the Church; and myriads of ages hence, you will be still blessing God that you did so.

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